

Staying Safe After Daylight Savings (Fall)

Time change poses safety hazards for construction and other outdoor workers. Daylight saving time gives everybody one extra hour of sleep, which should mean people are more alert, but the change can pose significant risks for construction workers and anyone else who works outside. With darkness arriving earlier in the day for the next five months, it means it will feel like nighttime during the commute home from work.

The National Road Safety Foundation in the US says car accidents increase after the clocks fall back. Here in Canada, the Occupational Safety Group says traffic accidents spike by as much as 23% on the Monday following a time change. Construction Safety Nova Scotia (CSNS) wants to help keep everyone safe, whether they're on the job, going to work, or heading home. It has offered seven helpful tips for construction workers that could be applied to anybody working outdoors.

Every year, when clocks “fall back” in autumn or “spring forward” in spring, **your internal clock gets disrupted**. Even though it's just one hour, it can **affect your sleep, focus, and reaction time**, especially during the first week.

Increased Risks Include:

- Drowsiness and slower reaction times
- Reduced visibility during early morning or evening shifts
- Higher chances of slips, trips, and falls
- More distracted or tired drivers in work zones

1. Get Enough Rest

- Aim for **7–8 hours of sleep** to stay alert.
- Go to bed earlier for a few days before the time change.
- Watch for signs of fatigue in yourself and others.

2. Use Extra Caution in Low Light

- Wear **high-visibility gear** at all times.
- Ensure **work zone lighting** is working properly.
- Be aware: it's **darker earlier** in the evening after fall DST ends.

3. Stay Alert Around Traffic

- Assume drivers **may not see you clearly**, especially during dawn and dusk.
- Set up **proper signage and barriers** in roadwork zones.
- Use **flaggers and spotters** where needed.

4. Inspect Tools and Equipment

- Poor light conditions can hide damage or hazards.
- Do a **quick pre-use check** in good lighting.
- Make sure **headlamps, floodlights**, and backup alarms are working.

5. Adjust Your Routine

- Stretch and warm up before starting work—especially if feeling groggy.
- Take **short breaks** if needed to stay alert.
- Double-check tasks that require focus (e.g., operating machinery, working at heights).

6. Look Out for Each Other

- A co-worker who seems drowsy or “off” could be at risk.
- Speak up if you see unsafe behavior or someone struggling to stay alert.
- Safety is a **team effort**—help each other stay sharp.

Supervisor's Notes:

- Encourage reporting of any visibility issues or fatigue-related concerns.
- Consider adjusting shift times temporarily if visibility is poor or fatigue is widespread.



