

# FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

Road Freight Update

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# INTRODUCTION

Fatigue is one of the most persistent challenges facing the road freight industry. In New Zealand, driver fatigue is a contributing factor in around one in ten fatal crashes, and is widely understood to be under-reported (NZTA Factsheet 24, 2025).

At Transporting New Zealand, we represent operators dealing with this every day. Managing fatigue is not just about complying with work time rules. It requires understanding how risk builds across scheduling, customer demands, infrastructure constraints, and individual behaviour.

This update is structured accordingly. It begins with the current picture of fatigue-related crashes and risk in New Zealand. While the latest crash data shows a decline in fatigue related fatalities, there is still a lot more that can be done to keep all road users safe and alert.

This is followed by a look at two industry case studies: Tranzliquid Logistics' Alternative Fatigue Management Scheme and VT Transport's proactive approach to fatigue management.



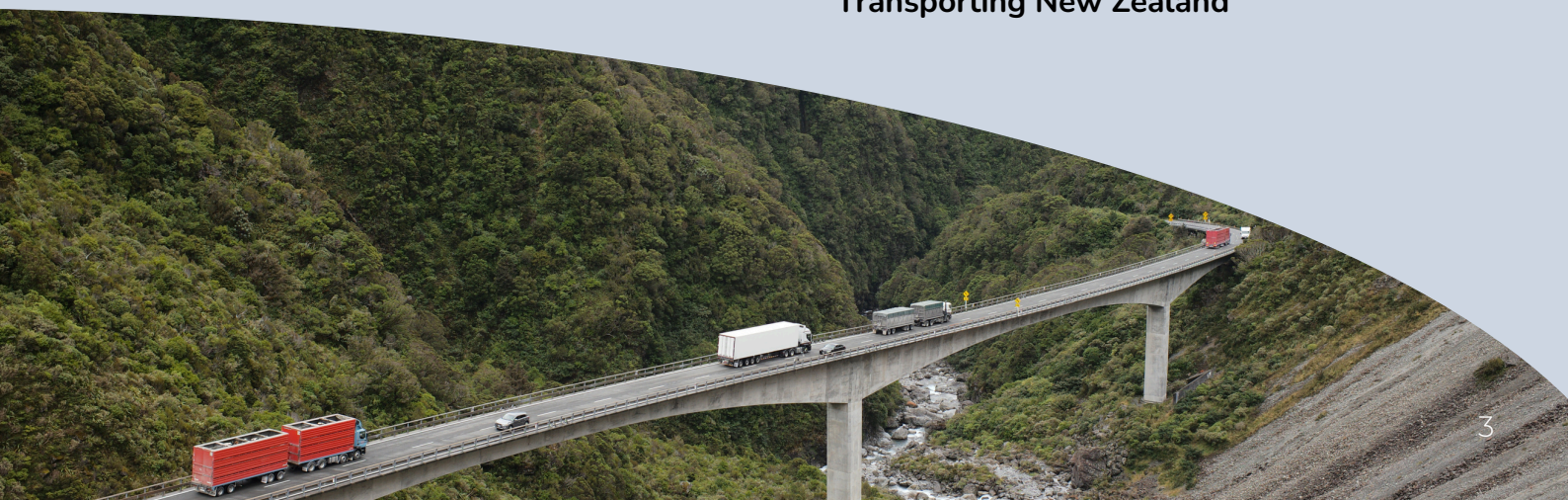
There is also a data snapshot from the latest New Zealand Guardian Insights report produced by AutoSense, and practical fatigue management tips from AutoSense Fatigue and Sleep Specialist Kat Aubrey.

I'm also pleased to be sharing Transporting New Zealand's four leading fatigue priorities - our key asks of industry, the government and industry supporters later in this update.

Fatigue cannot be eliminated, but it can be better managed. This update is intended to support a practical, industry-led approach that improves safety outcomes while recognising the realities of moving freight across New Zealand.

## Dom Kalasih

Chief Executive  
Transporting New Zealand



# AUTOSENSE FOREWORD

Every day, thousands of New Zealanders get behind the wheel for work while carrying the often invisible effects of fatigue.

For some, it's the driver heading home after a night shift. For others, it's the courier finishing a long route, the tradie on an early motorway commute, or the heavy vehicle operator navigating demanding schedules and long hours on the road.

Fatigue does not always announce itself loudly. Often, it builds quietly - through disrupted sleep, stress, early starts, inconsistent routines or an underlying and undiagnosed health condition like sleep apnoea.



*Charles Dawson, CEO AutoSense*

At AutoSense, we work closely with organisations across New Zealand and Australia to help manage driver safety risk through technology, operational insight and practical support.

Through that work, we see firsthand how fatigue continues to affect drivers across industries - from freight and logistics through to utilities, infrastructure and field services.

Importantly, fatigue is not simply a transport issue, nor is it a reflection of poor intent or carelessness. In many cases, it affects experienced, conscientious drivers doing demanding jobs under real operational pressures.

That is why education and awareness remain so important.

This update from Transporting New Zealand contributes meaningfully to that conversation. It highlights both the complexity of fatigue and the need for organisations, leaders and drivers to take a proactive approach to managing it.

The New Zealand Guardian Insights report produced by AutoSense reinforces the scale and evolving nature of that risk.



Drawing on more than 485 million kilometres of monitored driving data from 6,098 New Zealand fleet vehicles, the latest report identified 26,903 verified fatigue events - a 46 percent increase in events year-on-year to 31 March 2026, alongside a 72 percent increase in verified distraction events. Call centre interventions following flagged fatigue detections increased 29 percent.

Importantly, these increases do not necessarily mean New Zealand drivers have suddenly become significantly less safe. Rather, improved technology including the introduction of early drowsiness detection is helping fleets detect fatigue events that may previously have gone unnoticed.

The timing of these events is notable. The highest incidence of fatigue continues to occur in the working week and during morning commuting periods, when commercial drivers and the public are sharing increasingly busy roads.

These are not isolated overnight freight risks. They are everyday operational realities occurring on roads shared with the wider public.

The findings also reinforce an important point - while technology is helping the industry better identify fatigue and distraction risk, technology alone is not the solution.

AutoSense also works with organisations in broader fatigue risk management beyond in-vehicle technology.

This includes fatigue education, Safe Driving Policy Advisory, and specialist fatigue management and sleep services including support for drivers experiencing underlying sleep-related conditions such as sleep apnoea - a significant but often under-recognised fatigue risk.

In the past 12 months, AutoSense Fatigue and Sleep specialist Kat Aubrey has supported 104 New Zealand fleet drivers by identifying and managing underlying sleep-related conditions, reducing their potential fatigue risk and improving the driver's health, alertness, and safety outcomes.

Effective fatigue management requires leadership, operational planning, supportive workplace culture and ongoing driver engagement.

We are proud to support Transporting New Zealand's work in this area and commend everyone involved in contributing to this update.

By continuing to share insights, research and practical learnings across the industry, New Zealand has an opportunity to improve safety outcomes not only for transport operators, but for everyone who uses our roads.

**Charles Dawson**

**Chief Executive Officer  
AutoSense**

# DRIVER FATIGUE IN NEW ZEALAND

NZ Transport Agency data shows a promising decline in fatal and serious injury crashes when fatigue has been a contributing factor.

However, fatigue was still a contributing factor in 11 fatal crashes in 2025, and 71 serious non-fatal crashes. Over the the past 13 years, fatigue has contributed to more fatal crashes than overtaking and weather factors combined.

The importance of good fatigue management was also a clear theme in Transporting New Zealand's 2025 National Road Freight Survey.

Survey respondents rated the health, safety and wellbeing of drivers as a leading issue of importance, ranking alongside the other top four issues of high business costs, economic pressures, and the poor state of the roading network.

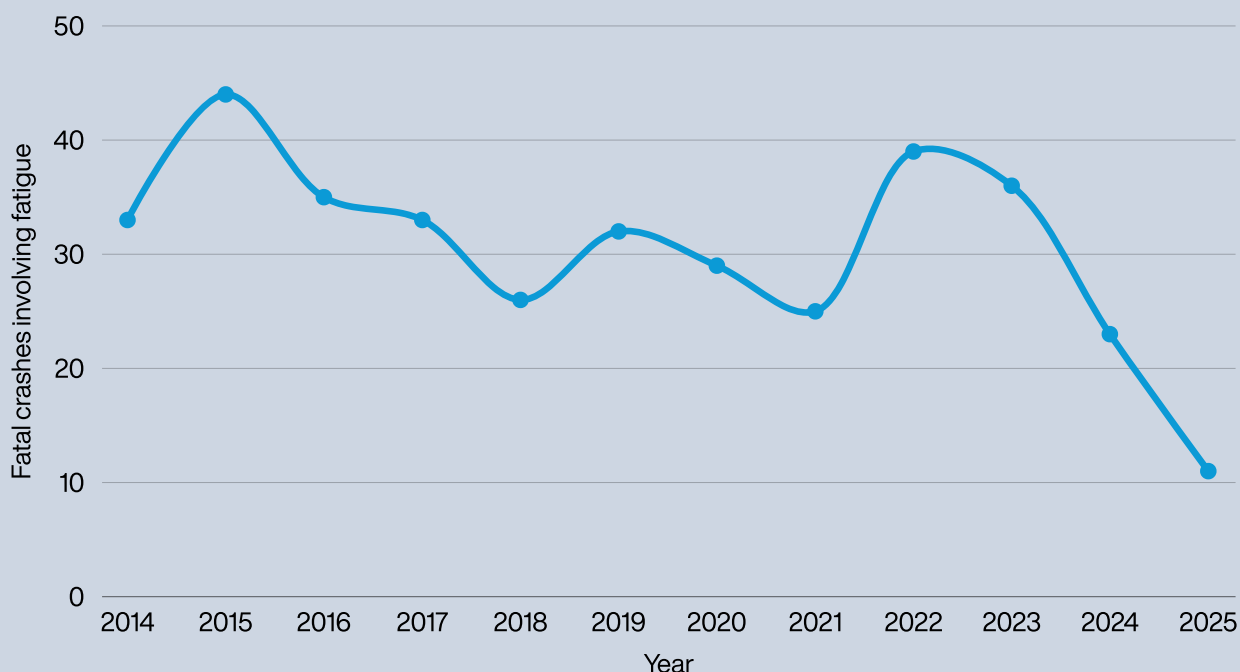


When asked about leading issues for driver wellbeing, respondents identified the need for purpose-designed rest stops for drivers (78%) and the need to achieve good work-life balance for drivers (72%) as the highest priority concerns.

While a majority of respondents agreed that work time rules were about right, just under a quarter wanted to see changes, suggesting that a review of our work time rules is well overdue.

## Fatal crashes with fatigue as a contributing factor

*An encouraging reduction - but still more to do*



Data Source: NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi

# CAMERAS, CULTURE AND CARE

## HOW VT TRANSPORT IS REDUCING DRIVER FATIGUE EVENTS

*Guardian by Seeing Machines technology helps Auckland transport operator reduce fatigue and support driver safety and wellbeing.*

### Organisation overview

Based in East Tamaki in Auckland, VT Transport Ltd operates a fleet of almost 60 trucks servicing customers across New Zealand, with a strong presence in the building and construction sector. The business transports everything from steel, frames, trusses and general freight, using vehicles ranging from Class 2 trucks through to Class 5 semis with Hiab-mounted cranes.

Under the leadership of Operations and Health and Safety Manager Jeremy Shute, VT Transport recently achieved a 100% SiteWise audit score following two consecutive years of SiteWise Gold accreditation.

With approximately 85 staff operating across varying shifts and start times, VT Transport has made fatigue management a growing priority across the business.

### Facing fatigue head-on

Like many transport operators, VT Transport recognised that fatigue and distraction can affect drivers across all types of transport work - from line haul journeys through to busy urban deliveries with constant competing demands on attention.

The business began exploring fatigue technology after recognising just how difficult fatigue can be to detect before an incident occurs.



*Jeremy Shute, Operations and Health & Safety Manager, VT Transport*

“Through conversations with NZI around fatigue management, we were encouraged to trial Guardian cameras and they funded our first units through the NZI Fleet Fit programme,” says Shute.

“That trial was a turning point for us - it showed us that fatigue events can happen even when drivers believe they’re okay to keep driving.

“It gave us visibility we didn’t have before and shaped the programme we’ve rolled out since.”

### Technology with real-world impact

VT Transport initially trialled two Guardian driver-monitoring cameras through AutoSense, before expanding the technology across approximately 10 line haul trucks.

Guardian uses in-cab technology to monitor fatigue and distraction, issuing real-time seat vibrations and audible alerts when a fatigue event is detected.

Fatigue management was the primary motivation for installing the technology, helping the business take a more proactive approach to identifying and reducing fatigue risk across its fleet.

Guardian data comparing the year to 31 March 2025 with the year to 31 March 2026 showed a 32 percent reduction in fatigue events, demonstrating the positive impact the technology is having on driver safety and wellbeing.

Over time, Shute says the cameras have helped reinforce more attentive driving across the fleet.

“The cameras create awareness,” he says. “Drivers know if they’re showing signs of fatigue or distraction, the system will pick it up - and that changes behaviour.”

### **Supporting drivers, not policing them**

Shute says building trust with drivers was one of the most important parts of the rollout.

“We explained to our drivers that we don’t sit there watching driving footage all day,” he says. “We only receive short clips if there’s a fatigue or distraction event, so there has to be a reason for us to review anything.

“That was a huge reassurance for our drivers around privacy.”

The business actively follows up fatigue alerts, with Shute or the fleet manager reviewing incidents and checking directly on drivers’ wellbeing.

“If I think it’s a real fatigue event, I’ll contact the driver straight away and tell them to pull over and have a break,” he says.

The technology also helped identify an underlying sleep-related health condition affecting one of VT Transport’s drivers after repeated fatigue events were detected. Working with AutoSense Fatigue and Sleep Specialist Katrina Aubrey, subsequent sleep testing confirmed sleep apnoea, allowing the driver to receive further support and treatment.

“Since treatment, we haven’t had another fatigue event from that driver.

### **Safety culture from the top down**

Over the past three years, VT Transport has continued strengthening its broader safety systems and policies, including working with AutoSense to review and further develop its Safe Driving Policy.



*VT Transport at work*

Shute says AutoSense has played an important role in shaping the company's thinking around driver wellbeing and safety procedures.

"The new technology and the conversations around fatigue have helped build a much stronger safety culture within the business.

"We do it for everybody's safety - not just our business, but for our employees, their families, and everybody else sharing the road."

Paul Fossi, AutoSense National Sales Manager, says VT Transport has embraced a proactive approach to fatigue management and driver care.

"Jeremy and the team genuinely care about their drivers and are always looking at ways to improve safety outcomes," says Fossi.

"They've taken what they've learned through Guardian and embedded it into the wider culture of the business."

“



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*"Making sure our staff get home safely every day is my number one priority. If we're looking after our drivers properly, we're helping make the roads safer for everyone."*

**Operations and Health and Safety Manager Jeremy Shute, VT Transport**

*VT Transport Ltd operates a fleet of almost 60 trucks servicing customers across New Zealand*



# NEW ZEALAND GUARDIAN INSIGHTS 2025-2026

## Understanding fatigue trends across New Zealand fleets

AutoSense's New Zealand Guardian Insights Report provides a national snapshot of fatigue risk across commercial vehicle fleets operating on New Zealand roads.

The 2025–26 report draws on human-verified driving data from 6,098 Guardian-equipped vehicles across 842 fleets, representing more than 485 million kilometres travelled and 10.5 million driving hours monitored during the year ending 31 March 2026.

The findings reinforce an important insight: fatigue is occurring during everyday operations — not just during overnight freight movements or long-haul driving.

Guardian by Seeing Machines detects both fatigue and distraction events in real time using advanced in-cab monitoring technology, with events human-verified by trained analysts at the 24/7 Guardian Call Centre.

### FATIGUE

**26,903 verified fatigue events**

↑ 46% on prior year

**18,297 fatigue intervention phone calls\***

\*12 months to 30 April 2026

Fatigue events are consistently observed across everyday driving environments, with clear peaks during morning commuting and early afternoon operational periods.

They were most frequently recorded during standard weekday operating hours — particularly between 7:00–9:00, with a secondary peak between 1:00–2:00.

The highest concentration of fatigue events occurred on Mondays and Tuesdays, highlighting elevated fatigue levels at the beginning of the working week.

Importantly, increased event volumes also reflect significant improvements in Guardian detection capability introduced during late 2025 — including enhanced early drowsiness detection designed to identify fatigue-related behaviours earlier than previously possible.

### DISTRACTION

**83,244 verified distraction events**

**Including 14,980 mobile phone events**

↓ 16% mobile phone use on prior year

Distraction events were most commonly detected between 7:00am and 3:00pm, aligning with periods of heavier traffic volumes and increased road activity across New Zealand roads.



## DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT

Scan the QR code below to access the full New Zealand Guardian Insights Report 2025–26, including detailed analysis of fatigue trends across time of day, day of week and seasonal operating periods.



## UNDERSTANDING THE INSIGHTS

Understanding real-world fatigue and distraction trends helps fleets make more informed safety decisions, better support driver wellbeing, reduce preventable incidents, and contribute to safer roads for all road users.



# ALTERNATIVE FATIGUE MANAGEMENT SCHEMES

An Alternative Fatigue Management Scheme (AFMS) is a risk management programme, designed and managed by individual transport operators then approved by NZTA, that permits that transport business to safely and proactively manage work that may exceed standard work-time periods, manage unplanned delays and improve vehicle utilisation.

NZTA currently approves two types of AFMS. AFMS 1 provides greater flexibility in how work and rest breaks are structured and taken, while AFMS 2 allows operators to extend the maximum length of a work day beyond 13 hours, provided they remain within the maximum cumulative limit of 70 hours before a 24-hour break is taken.

Developing an AFMS begins with appointing a project manager to lead the process.

Operators should then review their existing systems and procedures against NZTA's AFMS standards, identify appropriate operational limits and fatigue countermeasures, and consult with drivers and contractors on the proposed approach.

Once these elements have been completed, the scheme can be documented and submitted through NZTA's AFMS application process.

Operators interested in AFMS are encouraged to contact their local Transporting New Zealand membership advisor.



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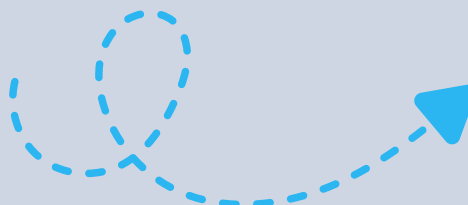
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Find NZTA's AFMS resources by scanning the QR code





## AFMS FOR FUEL DELIVERY TRANZLIQUID LOGISTICS

As one of the first road freight operators to develop an Approved Fatigue Management Scheme (AFMS), Tauranga-based Tranzliquid says the system has become an important tool for supporting both driver safety and operational efficiency.

The company has operated its AFMS 2 scheme for more than 15 years. The system allows employees to work up to 16 cumulative work hours provided required rest breaks are taken. There is some ability under certain conditions to take shorter break (15 minutes) provided additional rest breaks of 30 minutes or more are taken as required under the AFMS criteria.

Tranzliquid says their AFMS allows drivers to manage their worktime, plan their day, and enable more productivity, especially when unexpected delays occur.

It works well for planning fuel deliveries as the trip times and destinations do not change, and it gives

flexibility for the unexpected delays.

Driver feedback on the scheme has been consistently positive, particularly around flexibility and work-life balance.

At the same time, Tranzliquid emphasises that AFMS is not a one-size-fits-all model. Any application must demonstrate a genuine business need, effective fatigue controls, and a strong company-wide safety culture.

Operators working under AFMS also face significantly higher consequences for non-compliance, including logbook breaches attracting penalties three times greater than standard offences.

Tranzliquid also notes that AFMS arrangements are only used on a relatively small proportion of shifts, with the majority of drivers continuing to operate within standard work time and rest hour rules.

# TRANSPORTING NEW ZEALAND'S FATIGUE PRIORITIES



1

**Work** to get fit-for-purpose truck rest stop facilities on key freight routes identified as a priority in Regional Land Transport Plans and the National Land Transport Programme, so that drivers can keep well rested and refreshed.

2

**Increase** uptake of Alternative Fatigue Management Schemes by working with NZTA to refresh resources, ensure consistent guidance, and increase operator awareness of their safety and productivity benefits.

3

**Review** the Land Transport Rule: Work Time and Logbooks to ensure it remains evidence-based and fit for purpose, including consideration of fatigue and rest management requirements associated with Cook Strait ferry travel.

4

**Collaborate** with regulators and suppliers to improve the collection and analysis of fatigue-related safety data to better understand fatigue risks and target interventions where they will have the greatest safety benefit.



AutoSense Fatigue and Sleep Specialist  
Kat Aubrey

# GOOD FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

Written by Transporting New Zealand with input from AutoSense Fatigue and Sleep Specialist Kat Aubrey

Unlike many workplace hazards, fatigue can be difficult to recognise and is often underestimated by those experiencing it. However, fatigue can impair reaction time, concentration, judgement and decision-making long before a person falls asleep.

Fatigue is not simply about hours worked. Sleep quality, stress, hydration, nutrition, health conditions and circadian rhythms all influence how alert a person is behind the wheel. Research also shows that people are often poor judges of their own fatigue levels, making it essential to recognise the warning signs before they develop into a serious safety risk.

One of the greatest dangers is the microsleep: a brief, involuntary lapse in attention that can occur without warning. During a microsleep, a driver may be unable to process information for several seconds while a vehicle continues travelling at highway speeds.

Creating a safer industry requires a better understanding of how fatigue develops and the practical steps that can be taken to manage it. In the **video available below**, Fatigue and Sleep Specialist Kat Aubrey explains the science behind fatigue, the signs and symptoms to look out for, and why early intervention matters. Be sure to check out the Quick Facts in the side bar for tips to help drivers and operators reduce risk and support safer journeys.

Watch Kat Aubrey explain fatigue, its risks and countermeasures in this video



## QUICK FACTS

Fatigue Management Points  
by AutoSense Fatigue and Sleep Specialist  
Kat Aubrey

### 1 Sleep

Sleep is the true recovery strategy.

- Aim for 7-9 hours per 24 hours.
- Avoid <5 hours in 24 hours or <12 hours in 48 hours.
- Sleep opportunity is a safety control, not a choice.

### 2 Strategy Napping

Planned naps are safer than unplanned microsleeps.

- Short naps are one of the strongest short-term countermeasures.
- 20-30 minute nap = improved alertness for several hours.
- Before night shifts or during circadian low (2-6am).
- Allow 10-15 minutes after waking to clear sleep inertia.

### 3 Strategic Caffeine

Caffeine masks fatigue temporarily. It does not remove it.

Caffeine works best when:

- Used before you become severely fatigued.
- In smaller doses (100-200mg).
- Not used within 6 hours of planned sleep.

### 4 Light Exposure

- Light directly influences the circadian system.
- Morning daylight improves alertness and anchor body clock.
- Bright light can help during night work (short-term boost).
- Dark, cool sleep environment is essential for recovery.

### 5 Physical Movement

Short bursts of activity:

- Brisk walking.
- Stretching.
- Fresh air.

### 6 Caffeine Naps

- Drink coffee.
- 20-minute naps immediately.
- Caffeine takes ~20 minutes to enter the bloodstream.

### 7 Rostering as a Primary Control

- Limit night shifts.
- Avoid long runs of early starts.
- Provide minimum 10-hour breaks.
- Ensure genuine sleep opportunity.

### What Doesn't Work

- Windows down.
- Loud music.
- Phone calls.
- Energy drinks in large doses.
- "Toughing it out"

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