

Changing wake-up times, even as little as two hours, disrupts the energy-restorative process and degrades alertness and performance.

Remedies

Bright lights in the nighttime work environment significantly increase performance. But, it's impossible to use bright lights when dark adaptation and night vision are critical to Coast Guard missions. However, pilots and crew should try to gain exposure to bright lights before each sortie. This exposure, even for a relatively short time, will help to reset the body clock, and prepare the body for wakefulness during the "back side of the clock." Planning the crew's exposure to sunlight is a powerful tool.

Conclusion

If you are tasked to schedule an RCO deployment, pay particular attention to sortie times and length. If possible, schedule an RCO crew dedicated solely to the special op mission.

Can a crew adapt completely to the "night shift"? I don't have a good answer. Full adaptation is hindered by lack of bright lights in the nighttime workplace during an operational patrol. However, recent studies have shown progress in phase shifts when temporary bright-light exposure is scheduled during the night shift.

What can be done in advance and during the deployment to ease the transition to the "night shift"? Strict maintenance of sleep, diet and environment is the cornerstone. The entire crew-endurance team, including schedulers and crew members, must adhere to the guidance I've presented. Obviously, operational commanders will be constrained by a variety of factors that may render some of this guidance unachievable. The goal is to provide safe, well-rested crews for night missions on a recurring basis and enhance the opportunity for success. 🦅

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Mishap-Free Milestones

VFA-83	11 years	44,500 hours
HS-8	24 years	
HS-14	9 years	31,000 hours
VRC-40	21 years	95,099 hours
VAW-124	12 years	23,000 hours
VR-53	11 years	43,425 hours
VP-40	38 years	243,000 hours
VAQ-138	23 years	38,584 hours
VF-11	11 years	37,881.5 hours
HS-6	16 years	53,500 hours
HC-5	7 years	52,052 hours
VAQ-129	2 years	15,137 hours
VFA-81	11 years	45,500 hours

HT-18 27 years 1,000,000 hours

Congratulations to Helicopter Training Squadron Eighteen on this historic milestone. Based aboard NAS Whiting Field, Milton, Fla., HT-18 trains approximately 300 new helicopter pilots annually in the Bell TH-57 Jet Ranger.



HT-18 celebrates the squadron's surpassing 1,000,000 Class-A mishap-free flight hours at a cake cutting ceremony. From left, 1stLt. Justin Howe and Maj. Keith Kincannon, the crewmembers who flew the TH-57 aircraft that reached the milestone; HT-18 Commanding Officer LtCol. Ron Colyer; Suzanne Carris, aircraft issuer, TH-57 Program and David Carrington, maintenance manager, TH-57 Program. Photo by Kevin Gaddie