PROMOTE SAFE WORK

Learning | Leading | Looking after

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Improving Human and Organizational Performance

Reducing Burnout

December 2025

Prepared by

Dr. Samantha Jones, Postdoctoral Scholar

Dr. Thomas O'Neill, Arts-Engineering Chair in High-Performance Teamwork and Engineering Education

Possible Action Steps: Reducing Burnout

1. Create Manageable Workloads

Leaders ensure staffing, scheduling, and task demands are realistic, so no one has to "push through" every day just to keep up. Treat excessive stress symptoms as a safety near-miss.

Actions: *Prioritize shift tasks as "must-do", "should-do", "can-wait" to help manage overwhelm and rushing*

2. Normalize Conversations About Fatigue

Routinely check in on energy levels and mental strain. Make it acceptable, and expected, to talk about overload without stigma.

Action: *Implement simple, well-being check-ins at the start of shifts (traffic lights: red, yellow, green).*

3. Protect Time for Rest and Recovery

Rest is about capacity management. If fatigue contributes to mistakes, treat it as a system signal. If leaders don't treat rest as legitimate, no one else will.

Action: *Model and enforce real breaks, microbreaks, and recovery time.*

4. Reduce System Inefficiencies and Declutter Bureaucracies

Identify and reduce the everyday hassles, inefficiencies, and "mental load traps" that drain workers — broken tools, unclear procedures, constant vigilance, excessive admin.

Action: *Following high-stress tasks or projects, debrief lessons learned. What created excessive strain? Which controls failed (e.g., staffing)? What will we change next time?*

Final Thought:

If workers must constantly ramp up, compensate, and push through fatigue to get the job done — the system is burning them out, not the work ethic.