



We asked crew on *La Brea* season 2 about fatigue

MEAA surveyed crew and received more than 80 responses from mostly full-time crew on Matchbox Pictures' *La Brea* season 2. We also asked partners and family for their observations.

Definition: fatigue is **mental and/or physical exhaustion** that reduces your ability to perform your work safely and effectively.

Here's what they reported

- > 95% experienced fatigue during the production, 79% at least weekly, 33% most or every day
- > 60% experienced a microsleep while driving
- > 89% experienced another symptom of fatigue while driving, such as slow reaction time, drifting from lane, trouble keeping head up, sore eyes, difficulty remembering the last few kms, or variations in driving speed

Virtually all departments reported driving incidents caused by fatigue. Alarming high numbers were reported in unit, camera, SFX, stunts, and lighting; art, ADs, costume, COVID safety, grips, hair and makeup, production, rigging electrics, and set dec all reported regular incidents.

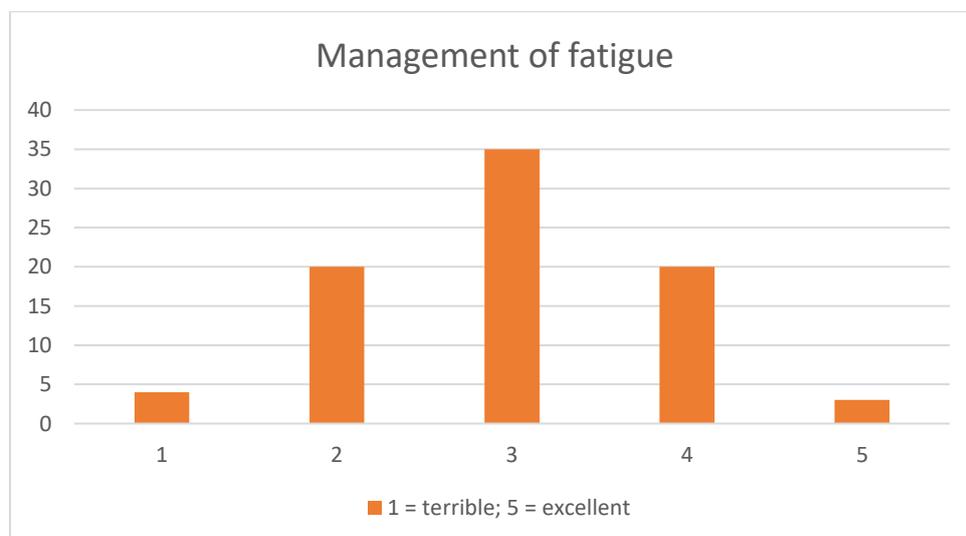
What's causing it?

- > Travel to and from work or during the day (74%)
- > Changes to schedules or work briefs (62%)
- > Unplanned overtime (56%)
- > Frequent additional hours (54%)
- > Factors outside work (9%)

How well did crew think the production managed fatigue?

The production was the first to agree to guarantee accommodation or return transport home on request for all crew due to fatigue (referred to as the 'fatigue management provisions'), with a high take-up from crew (68%). 88% of crew who used the accommodation said that it reduced fatigue. Crew reported that it increased sleep and was reassuring to know it was available. However, a number of crew also felt it was at times used in preference to traditional overnight accommodation as a way to avoid paying per diems.

Crew's overall assessment of the production's management of fatigue was mixed.



Barriers to using the fatigue management provisions

The most-cited reason for not using the fatigue management provisions was having a request rejected,

either because they were told it didn't apply to them (particularly off-set crew) or there was none available, with some feedback that their request was not taken seriously, or they did not feel they could ask. Other barriers mentioned were responsibilities at home, not knowing about the provisions or the transport option, and the distance to the accommodation vs home.

How well did crew think the production managed additional hours?

Crew had less confidence in the production's management of the additional hours required of them, without more than double the number of crew having a negative view than a having positive one.



34% said their department didn't have enough staff to cover workload demands and breaks, suggesting that this was a significant factor, but that there were also other practices that drove additional hours.

What was the impact of long hours on crew on *La Brea* season 2?

- Reduced their connection with friends and community (79%)
- Negatively affected their physical health (72%)
- Eroded their mental health (67%)
- Negatively impacted their family (61%)
- Undermined their safety (44%)

70% said they didn't have flexibility to handle family or other responsibilities outside of work. Detailed feedback from crew describes how fatigue, while being a serious issue on its own, is also a hazard that increases other immediate safety risks and reduces productivity.

What are crew's attitudes to staying in the industry long-term?

Nearly one in four said they either did not see themselves continuing in the industry in five years, or would limit their availability to part-time, work from home or other restrictions.

Conclusion – a step forward, but more work to do

Fatigue reduces the physical, mental and emotional capacity of crew both at work and at home.

The fatigue management provisions on *La Brea* season 2 helped partially address the particularly acute safety issue of crew having to drive while dangerously fatigued, as well as reducing overall fatigue. Matchbox should be recognised for taking this important step forward.

However, it's clear that fatigue was still a persistent problem on the production, with the results pointing to management of the long hours that cause fatigue as an area that needs more attention, consistent with feedback from crew across the industry. Both crew and their families are concerned about and impacted by the effects of the industry's long hours, something that could harm our ability to maintain our workforce.

To prevent fatigue, we need to commit to proactively improving management of long hours and progressing the industry's working culture toward a safer and healthier work-life balance.

Feedback from crew and their families in their own words

Crew on the impacts of fatigue:

- > “Brain fog, inability to concentrate, feeling burned out”
- > “Slower reaction times and poor memory”
- > “Physically worn down, longer healing times, general lethargy at work and home, general exhaustion, lack of emotional engagement due to punishing hours”
- > “I did a lot of stupid/thoughtless things that I wouldn't normally do because I was working in survival mode a lot of the time - some of these things impacted the safety of others.”
- > “As the months went on and the workload only grew, I could feel my quality of work also worsened. I was paying less attention, caring less, less able to do my job to a good standard. I started to have less and less patience, resilience and stress management.”

Partners and family of crew on the impact of the job:

“For months my partner has effectively only seen our child on weekends. He is up and out of the house before she is awake and is home well after she has gone to sleep. This takes a huge toll not only on my partner but on our daughter and family.”

“I am constantly worried about his safety to and from and at work. He looks so tired when he gets home that there are times I’m relieved that he managed to get home at all.”

“She works longer hours than anyone I know. I get worried about her driving home at 1 or 2am for an hour when she has not been given accommodation. I worry that hers is a workplace that doesn’t take crew safety seriously.”

“By the end of a show he is a shell of himself just from tiredness. It takes about a week for him to fully recover and go back to his old self.”

“I have to be able to manage work full time and family on my own for months.”

“Unable to organise activities and spend time with one another as the work schedule was so tight.”

“Don’t attend family and gathering for friends. Become increasing isolated.”

Crew on the Fatigue Management Provisions (increased accommodation):

“Providing accommodation was the only way for me to see this job through. I would have been too exhausted driving to and from home after every day without it.”

“I honestly would have crashed if it hadn't been for Fatigue Management. I did the first part of the production without it and I resorted to sleeping in my car closer to set on consecutive days far from home. Fatigue Management was one of the only things which made the long hrs, job pressures and schedule changes somewhat manageable.”

Additional comments from crew:

“It must be reiterated that the physical and mental requirements on a shoot like La Brea is all consuming on one's life. The capacity for anything else doesn't really exist and it impacts my family greatly as I can't be present physically or mentally. I have had to seek treatment consistently to keep up with the physical demands of the job and frankly speaking it has put me in a depressive state due to the tiring, relentless nature of the shoot conditions.”

“Sufficient pre-production and locked scripts are important. Constant changes affected everyone below the line on a daily, sometimes hourly basis causing stress and overtime or wasted time. Fatigue effects more than driving. When the mental stability of an entire community becomes eroded, workplace culture and the possibility of job satisfaction becomes null and void.”