

Fly-in/Fly-out



***Helpful ideas and tips
for living a
fly-in/fly-out lifestyle***

About this book

This booklet is written for fly-in/fly-out mining employees. In the booklet we refer to fly-in/fly-out as fifo. All of the ideas were suggested by fifo employees and their families.

This booklet aims to:

- help you know and understand what to expect in a fifo lifestyle
- provide some practical strategies and
- list some useful community and company resources that can assist you to maintain strong and healthy relationships.

You can start reading anywhere in this booklet, just choose a section that looks interesting to you.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks go to the many fifo families who so generously shared their experiences, understandings and wisdom to allow the development of this book.

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Introduction

Welcome to fifo - whether you've been doing it for ten years or ten days you will know that it is a unique lifestyle which will affect you, your friends and family in different ways.

There is no wrong or right way to do fifo. It depends on what suits you; each person adapts to the lifestyle in their own way, BUT it is very important to think about:

- your feelings.
- how you are going.
- how you feel about the lifestyle.
- and if there are things you or others (including friends, family or your employer) could do to make it work better for you.

Fifo employees say some of the keys to success are good communication, a positive attitude and a strong support system.

Throughout this book we use the term 'family' to include couples, parents, children and extended family members.

Looking after yourself at work

Fifo is a unique way of life that can take some getting used to . . . the regular comings and goings, long working hours, separation from family and friends and managing the time on break.

It is important that while you are on site and on break you take care of your emotional, physical and mental health. You are responsible for your own well-being and there are a number of things you can do to stay healthy.

The three Es...

Eating well...

It can be tempting when you are on site to overindulge, especially with those less healthy options that may be on offer in the mess. Try to avoid fatty and fried foods and choose more healthy options such as salads, stir fries, vegetables and fruit.



Exercising well...

Working 12 hour shifts can make it difficult to find time to exercise. Some options include using the gym in the camp/village; do some light exercise in your room - sit ups, push ups, stretches; you may be able to walk to or from the mine and the camp/village; convince your workmates to make a social sporting team such as cricket or basketball; grab a few mates and kick a football around after work; if the camp/village has a pool regularly do some laps or form social water polo teams. Not only do you get the benefit from exercise but it also helps reduce stress and tension.

Emotionally well...

Being away from your friends and family in an isolated environment can sometimes be lonely and stressful. However, it is very important to look after yourself and if you are having any difficulties, seek help and support sooner rather than later. It is ok to ask for help and it is important to know what support is available for you on site.

On site you might have:

- trusted work colleagues you can talk to.
- members of the OH&S team such as the site nurse.
- an on site company mentoring scheme.

Further information on maintaining strong relationships can be found on pages 7 and 8.

There are also some internet based fifo discussion lists that provide support and suggestions which you may find useful.

Some people like to remain independent and deal with issues themselves, but others prefer to have a strong support network around them. There is no wrong or right way, different people cope in different ways and differently at different times. Think about what will best help you stay healthy and happy.

It can be lonely especially if you are new to the site. There are a number of opportunities for you to make new friends. You could join a site based sporting or other activities; you could start up a new activity group or find like minded people to share some time with. Some people prefer to keep more to themselves when on site and take the time to study, read a book or catch up with a movie after work.



When you are on site and when you are home try to make time for yourself to relax - read the paper, play some sport, watch a movie or listen to music.

Looking after yourself at work



Looking after yourself at home

The three Es are just as important when you are home, particularly given fifo employees are on break for significant 'chunks' of time, rather than just two-day weekends.

Eating well...

Sometimes when you are home on break, particularly if you do a lot of socialising, it can be easy to over indulge on fast food and alcohol. Enjoy your time off, but remember to stay healthy.

Exercising well...

Some fifo rosters make it difficult to be a member of a sporting team or association when you are at home.

Ask your local team to cater for your comings and goings by providing a training schedule you can do while you are away, and to allow for a substitute team member to take your place while you are away. Some golf clubs now have special fifo memberships.

Think about changing sports to something that does not require a weekly commitment, or is less team-focused, for example, golf, surfing, running, swimming, gym work, or even fishing.

Emotionally well...

Fitting into the community when you return home is different for different people. You, your friends and your family will have had different experiences while you have been away, which you may or may not want to share with each other.

Many fifo employees take the time on the plane to leave work behind and get themselves into a home headspace so when they arrive it is easier to slot back in. Other people take the plane time to finish thinking about work and leave it until they get home to start thinking about their break.

Being home also gives you an opportunity to access support not available on site. At home there might be:

- close family and/or friends you can call on.
- other fifo people you have met who understand the particular issues you have to deal with, or
- you might be a member of a church or other social group that can provide support for you.



Emotionally well...

Remember there is also good professional help available. For example, most mining companies have an Employee Assistance Scheme (EAP). This is a confidential service, although the company pays for the bill they do not find out what you went to see the counsellor about. Your family doctor or the local community nurse can also provide support.



Avoid the overuse of alcohol or drugs, either for recreation or to help you through difficult times.

Relationships

Fifo presents unique challenges to making and maintaining friendships and other relationships both on site and at home.

On the positive side. Remember that the time you do have at home provides extra opportunities to share activities with friends and family, so make the most of it.

You can do things to make it easier for your friends and family to know when you will be 'in town' and available to get together by providing them with your roster and your contact details while on site.

You might also like to choose set times to meet (for example, if you are on a fortnightly, ie 9 and 5 roster, you could arrange to meet a group of friends for dinner every second Friday night) so that you have regular contact.

Make arrangements for your next break from site, or during the previous breaks, so that planning is not left to the last minute.

Relationships...

Don't forget you can keep in touch with friends and family while you are on site. You might have access to email, skype or phones, or could consider some of the other options suggested in the next section "Keeping in touch".

If your home-based friends are at work for much of the time you are on break, it is particularly important to plan ahead how you are going to spend your time. You might take the time to complete personal tasks such as bill paying and home maintenance or you might just like to relax and then have time to socialise when your friends are available.

Some people like to socialise with work colleagues while they are on break while others prefer to keep their work and home lives separate. Work out with your friends and workmates which is best for you.

When you meet new friends take time to explain to them what fifo is about and how it may impact on relationships. Don't assume they know.

Some people have negative understandings about the fifo lifestyle so take the time to explain both the positives and the challenges of the lifestyle to new people in your life, you never know what it might lead to.

Suggest to your family and friends they note in their diary/calendar/PDA when you will be home on break.

Special Occasions

Ask your friends and family, where possible, to try to celebrate special occasions when you are home on break, or to let you know far enough in advance so you can try and arrange your leave to enable you to attend the event.

Where you are unable to attend special events, ask someone to take photos or a video to send to you. If the facilities are available, ask them to consider “streaming” the event live on the internet or their phone.



Keeping in touch

One of the most common issues fifo employees talk about is communication and keeping in touch with family and friends while they are away.

How you keep in touch when you are apart depends on what works for you, and also on the facilities that are available on the minesite. Different mines have different arrangements but the continuing advances in technology are making staying in touch easier.

Here is a list of some ways to maintain regular communication. The following pages suggest more ways to use these.

- Telephones
- Skype
- Mobile phones
- Email
- Internet
- Letters
- Keeping a useful and up to date contacts list
- Celebrating milestones and family events.

If the site has mobile coverage SMS is a cheap, fast option to say a quick hello.

Telephones

- Some minesites have mobile phone coverage, while others provide landline phones, either free or user pays. More remote sites might rely on satellite phones.
- Find out what is available on your minesite and decide the best way to use this with your family and friends.
- How often you keep in touch, whether it is daily, weekly, or less frequently, is not important. There is no wrong or right way, it is what works best for you and the important people in your life.
- Discuss it between you and decide on the frequency and times that will work best for all of you.
- It is important to try to stick to the arrangement. Family and friends can easily get disappointed and worry unnecessarily if a phone call is late or unexpectedly missed. Texting can be useful for contacting people when you are short of time or too tired to call.

Avoid having arguments on the phone. Leave discussing difficult issues until you are home on break.

Keeping in touch...

Email

You might have access to email on your minesite - this can be a great, inexpensive way to keep in touch. Photos, invitations and other information can be quickly and easily shared.

A word of caution - be careful to re-read your email and make sure it says what you want it to say before you press the 'send' button. Once it has gone it cannot be retrieved and people can easily misunderstand or be upset by a message written and sent in haste. Sometimes it can be good to 'sleep on it' if the topic is a sensitive one.

Internet

Some fifo employees have access to the internet while they are on site. This is a good way to keep involved with your family and friends while you are away. Photos can be stored and accessed on free sites so friends and family members can easily share them. The internet can also be used to order gifts to be delivered for special occasions.



Letters

Letters and cards can be another great way to keep in touch. They are especially useful for people on longer “away” rosters such as two weeks at work, one week home.

An unexpected greeting card can be a nice surprise on a friend’s or family member’s birthday or other special occasion.

All minesites have postal deliveries. Let your friends and family know your postal address in case they wish to send you mail. Let them know that it may take the mail a little longer to reach remote sites, so they need to keep this in mind if the mail has to arrive in time for a special occasion such as a birthday. The head office of the company that owns your mine can be contacted for their postal address.

Skype

If the site has internet access skype can be a great way to keep in touch. Skype allows you to see and hear each other. All you need is the Skype program which is free to download and a special camera for your computer. These are quite inexpensive to purchase and most modern laptops have them inbuilt.

Keeping in touch...

Emergency contacts

It is important that your family and possibly even close friends know how to contact you should they need to, for example in an emergency. Do not assume friends and family will be able to find out how to do this by themselves.

Provide them with the contact numbers of your minesite, remembering to include after-hours numbers as well.

You could also have the contact details for the airline company the mine uses on your list.



Pages 19 and 20 have a blank list of contact phone numbers for you to fill in. Remember to update contact details if you change sites or employers.

Living arrangements

Fifo employees have different living arrangements when they are at home, for example you might live alone, with family, or house share. Some fifo employees share with people on the opposite roster, which means their house is not empty for long periods of time and there is usually someone at home to attend to household tasks or problems.

If you live alone you might like to arrange for neighbours, friends or family members to collect your mail, put out your bin and keep an eye on your house.

If you live with others, a common issue can be that of people's roles in the household. Tasks that need to be done for a household to run smoothly can include daily and weekly chores such as paying the bills or organising tradespeople to come and fix an unexpected household problem. Decide together who has responsibility for these different tasks - these may be different when you are away and when you are home. Work out together what is best for you.



Practical points

Here are some other practical points you might like to consider doing which may make your fifo life easier.

- Put together a list of emergency phone numbers including contact numbers for the minesite (see pages 19 and 20 for ideas).
- Put together a list of contacts of trusted tradespeople and keep a copy on site.
- Make a Will.
- Consider using internet banking and internet or phone bill-paying services if you can access these services from site.
- Consider using the internet for planning and booking holidays, ordering gifts and flowers and other shopping.
- Have a copy of all your important information with you on site, for example insurance and banking details.

Financial planning

Long term planning is important to making the most of the income you earn while working in the mining industry. You may like to consider using financial planning services and to develop a set of financial goals.

Getting to the airport

Getting to the airport can be an issue for fifo employees. If you do not live with someone who is available to drive you to the airport and pick you up at the end of your roster there are a number of options which you can consider:

- Take a taxi to and from the airport.
- Share transport with someone on your minesite who is on the same roster as you, this might be particularly useful if you live in a regional area a number of hours drive from the airport. Company on the drive to and from the airport make the drive easier (site noticeboards and email can be useful to find people to car pool).
- Leave your car at the airport while you are away (some people have an 'old bomb' specifically for this purpose).
- Ask a family member or friend to drive you.
- Use a hire car when you are at home and ask the hire company to deliver it to the airport for your arrival and pick it up from the airport when you leave for the minesite.



Reality check

Fifo works well for many people but as time goes by circumstances can change and so do people's needs. It can be useful to ask yourself on a regular basis how the lifestyle is going for you.

- Have things changed?
- Are there any things that need to be changed or adjusted?
- How long do you want to continue fifo?
- Are the benefits worth it?



When considering these issues don't forget to acknowledge the positives which the lifestyle offers. For example, 'chunks' of time at home.

Useful contacts

(for your friends and family)

Mine reception _____

Mine (after hours) _____

Room _____

Mobile _____

Work Mobile _____

Email

 Work _____

 Private _____

Head office (Perth) _____

Airline _____

Other _____

Other _____

*The key to happy fly-in/fly-out
is good communication!*

Useful contacts



Useful contacts

(for you to take with you on site)

Neighbours

Family

Friends

Bank

Insurance

Electrician

Plumber

Mechanic

Resources

There are many useful community resources to help you. Some of these are listed below.

Community resources

The white pages business and government telephone directory has listings of the contact details of useful community and government agencies. Check your local directory for more information.

Alcohol & Drug Information Services (ADIS)

Toll free 1800 198 024
Metro 9442 5000
Email: ADIS@health.wa.gov.au

Health Direct

24hr health advice 1800 022 222

Lifeline

13 11 14

Mensline Australia

National telephone counseling,
information and referral service
for men 1300 789 978

Rural Link - after hours mental health telephone service

operates 4:30pm - 8:30am
Monday to Friday and 24 hours
Saturday, Sunday and public
holidays 1800 552 002

The Samaritans

Toll free 1800 198 313
Metro 9381 5555

Relationships Australia

1300 364 277

Resources

Internet resources

There are also many useful websites that provide support and information. Some of these are listed below, others can be found using one of the popular search engines.

www.beyondblue.org.au

www.depressioNet.com.au

www.fifoinfo.com.au

www.man.org.au

Remember the internet can also be used to order gifts to be delivered for special occasions. Use a search engine to locate useful gift sites such as florist and gift hamper companies.

For example: www.wishlist.com.au



Disclaimer

Every care has been taken in preparing this list but it is intended as a guide only. It was accurate at the time of publication and does not necessarily reflect the preferences or opinions of the authors.

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