

# Switch to daylight saving time leads to cyberloafing at the office

March 7 2012

---

(Medical Xpress) -- The annual shift to daylight saving time and its accompanying loss of sleep cause employees to spend more time than normal surfing the Web for content unrelated to their work, resulting in potentially massive productivity losses, according to researchers.

Web searches related to entertainment rise sharply the Monday after the shift to daylight saving time when compared to the preceding and subsequent Mondays, according to D. Lance Ferris, assistant professor of management and organization in Penn State's Smeal College of Business, and his colleagues David T. Wagner, Singapore Management University; Christopher M. Barnes, Virginia Tech University; and Vivien K. G. Lim, National University of Singapore. They based their findings on an examination of six years worth of data from [Google](#).

Using existing data that shows that people exhibit poorer self-control when they're tired, the researchers said that the lost [sleep](#) due to the [time change](#) -- an average of 40 minutes that Sunday night -- makes employees less likely to self-regulate their behavior and more inclined to spend time cyberloafing, or surfing the Internet for personal pursuits while on the clock.

Ferris and his colleagues also conducted a [lab experiment](#) in which they monitored subjects' sleep the night before they were required to watch a boring lecture online. The less sleep the subjects received the night before, the more time they spent surfing the Web when they were supposed to be watching the lecture.

Interruptions in sleep had the same effect. In fact, the subjects on average engaged in 8.4 minutes more of cyberloafing (or 20 percent of the assigned task time) for every hour of interrupted sleep the night before.

While a few minutes of personal Web surfing now and then may seem harmless, given that about one-third of the world's countries participate in some form of daylight saving time, the researchers write in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* that "global productivity losses from a spike in employee cyberloafing are potentially staggering." In light of their discovery and other research on the true energy-saving effects of [daylight saving time](#), the authors encourage policymakers to revisit the costs and benefits of the time change policy.

They said their findings have implications for managers, who in the current economy, are squeezing more and more work out of fewer employees.

"In the push for high productivity, managers and organizations may cut into the sleep of employees by requiring longer work hours," the researchers write. "This may promote vicious cycles of lost sleep, resulting in less time spent working, which could result in more frantic pushes for extended work time. Managers may find that by avoiding infringement on employee sleep, they will get more productivity out of their employees."

The researchers said that employers can facilitate more self-regulation of their employees' cyberloafing if they encourage their employees to get a sufficient amount of sleep. Outside of that, they recommend turning computer screens so that colleagues can see them or even providing designated break times when personal Internet use would be permissible.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: Switch to daylight saving time leads to cyberloafing at the office (2012, March 7)  
retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-03-daylight-cyberloafing-office.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.