



## 100: Workplace Stress

### Facilitator duties for this session:

Look for examples within the workplace where stress may be an issue for employees.

### What this Safety Talk covers:

Factors and solutions that may address workplace stress of employees

### Reference Material:

For further information refer to:

- Relevant State Legislation
- Company Policy Statement

Stress in the workplace can arise as a result of the failure to control psychological hazards and therefore psychological hazard identification should be included in any hazard management system and risk assessment.

Psychological hazards are frequently referred to as stressors. Because these can not be readily identified as physical hazards and can occur suddenly, e.g. armed holds ups; or build up gradually, e.g. continued conflict, workplace bullying, family crisis etc, specific effort is required for their identification.

Stress is a complex phenomenon and the reaction to a given stressor will vary from individual to individual; i.e. Stress for one person may be totally different for another. For this reason it is impossible to list all sources of work stress. However, it is almost inevitable that certain factors, if present in the workplace, will result in some degree of distress in most of those individuals exposed to them.

### Common occupational stressors

High job demand combined with low job control

Delegation without authority

Lack of feedback on job performance

Workers not being valued

Poor match between the person and the job, e.g. lack of experience

Regular contact with clients who are themselves under strain and workplace stress

Workplace change at a rate that does not allow time for adjustment

Inadequate training or skills for the immediate job at hand

Poor and unsafe physical environment e.g. excessive noise, fumes, poor lighting or ventilation

Management or supervisors lacking in people management and communication skills

Shiftwork, fatigue and long work hours

Traumatic experiences in the workplace, e.g. workplace violence, bullying and racial or sexual harassment, workplace accidents leading to death or injury.

The impact of these stressors will be influenced by the personal circumstances of employees.

### What can the employer do?

1. Have a system in place to ensure stressors are identified and assessed and reported where possible. This should include:
  - consultation with employees, particularly important as the effect of the stressors can be so complex
  - monitoring known useful indicators such as poor job performance, morale, increased conflict, sick leave and staff turnover
2. Control the effect of the stressor. This may be by:
  - Removing or reducing the effects of the stressors

## Review and Discussion

What are some of the triggers that may lead to employees becoming stressed at work?

What are some of the methods that may be used to reduce or eliminate stress in the workplace?

How can you change your workplace to reduce or eliminate stress?

What are some of the signs of employees suffering from workplace stress?

Where can employees go for help if they believe they are suffering from workplace stress?

- Assisting employees to deal with the resultant distress when the stressors can not be removed.

### Some methods of reducing stress

- Develop a democratic management style
- Value each individual for their unique contribution
- Establish good selection and placement procedures
- Match jobs to peoples abilities and interests
- Induct people into their job, section, work group and the organisation
- Define roles and responsibilities clearly
- Document job descriptions, processes and procedures
- Provide appropriate training for all levels
- Have a fair system of feedback and job appraisal
- Establish career development opportunities
- Deal with conflict
- Carefully plan how to introduce change
- Attend to job design
- Monitor workload and pace
- Provide job autonomy and variety
- Maintain a physical environment which exceeds minimal safety and standards
- Provide protective equipment

### Some ways to help employees deal with distress

Educate employees:

- To recognise and understand effects of stressful situations
- In problem solving techniques and rational thinking
- In social skills and information

Develop policies and procedures to deal with anticipated stressful situation before they arise

Provide access to employee assistance programs, schemes and counselling

Promote activities which enhance physical and mental health.

Notes:

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## 100: Workplace Stress Review and Assessment

**Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle the correct answer to the following questions.**

- |  |      |       |
|--|------|-------|
| Stress is a complex phenomenon and the reaction to a given stressor will vary from individual to individual.                       | True | False |
| Stress for one person is exactly the same for another.   | True | False |
| A common occupational stressor is shiftwork, fatigue or long work hours.   | True | False |
| A good way to assist to remove occupational stress is to match jobs to peoples abilities and interests.                            | True | False |
| Defining roles and responsibilities of a worker is not a way of reducing stress.   | True | False |
| Educating employees in problem solving techniques and rational thinking will help employees deal with stress.                      | True | False |
| Monitoring workload and pace of work will not help to reduce stress for employees.   | True | False |
| Traumatic experiences in the workplace, workplace violence, bullying and racial or sexual harassment may lead to increased stress. | True | False |
| Stress in the workplace can arise as a result of the failure to control psychological hazards.                                     | True | False |
| A common occupational stressor is people not being valued for their work performance.  | True | False |

**Participants Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



# Toolbox Talks Register

## 1. TOOLBOX TALK NUMBER / DETAILS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session Leader / Trainer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Commenced: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Site / Project Location: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. PARTICIPANTS PRESENT

Name	Signature

## 3. ISSUES ARISING FROM TALK

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Session Leaders Sign Off: \_\_\_\_\_