

NSW mining and extractives industry

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH? WHY IS IT A HEALTH HAZARD?	WHAT ARE THE EXPOSURE MONITORING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HEALTH HAZARD?	WHAT ARE THE HEALTH MONITORING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HEALTH HAZARD?
<p>As outlined by the World Health Organisation, mental health 'is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, to cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community' (Galderisi et al, 2015).</p> <p>Mental health can be a dynamic state and as such</p>	<p>The 2012 report <i>Mental Health and the NSW Minerals Industry</i> estimates that between 8000 to 10,000 employees are likely to experience a common mental illness such as anxiety, depression or substances use disorder over a 12-month period¹. Ill mental health can be influenced by exposure to a range of factors in the workplace including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ a poorly designed or managed work environment■ mentally physical or emotionally demanding work■ excessive or prolonged work pressures	<p>There are no specific exposure monitoring requirements for mental health, however it may be beneficial to use a psychosocial risk assessment.</p> <p>Developed in conjunction with Safe Work Australia, University of QLD, the Australia National University and Worksafe Victoria and WorkCover Queensland the People at work program aims to assist organisations in identifying, managing and evaluating workplace risks to the psychological health of everyone within the organisation. The tool includes a valid psychosocial risk assessment tool and resources available to implement a psychosocial risk management approach within the organisation. (WorkCover QLD, 2017).</p>

¹ B Kelly, T Hazell, R Considine, *Mental Health and the NSW Minerals Industry*, NSW Minerals Council, 2012.

can be adversely affected whereby an individual's mental health can be altered to a state of mental ill health.

- bullying or harassment
- a traumatic event
- workplace violence (Safe Work Australia, 2017).

CONTROLS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

There are key points that should be considered when developing a health control plan¹. The aim should be to achieve the best fit between the working environment, the systems of work and the needs and capabilities of workers. Some effective controls include:

- to reduce workplace violence, place a barrier between an aggressive person and the person interacting with that individual
- placing barriers to reduce noise from a noisy environment and the work area
- defining the job so individuals are aware of their scope of work requirement
- better job planning to ensure a balance between work demands and time pressures
- consulting with workers when setting targets
- providing support systems within the workplace such as mentoring
- planning, management and communication for organisational change
- training, induction and instruction on workplace behaviour, for example prevention of bullying and harassment at the workplace
- addressing workplace factors that may affect the mental health of employees
- effective and available employee assistance program for employees
- supervisors trained in recognising and supporting employees experiencing mental ill health
- guidelines addressing mental health developed and disseminated
- ensuring the management of critical events occur in a manner that reduces psychological risks. (Safe Work Australia, 2017).

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