

Fact sheet

Psychosocial hazards

December 2023

Dealing with psychosocial hazards in the workplace

Background

Amendments to the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 have been implemented to include psychosocial risks. This is in addition to the [Code of practice, Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#) that was published in 2021. Psychosocial hazards extend beyond bullying and harassment and are defined as any aspect of work or situation that may cause a response resulting in psychological or physical harm.

The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 identifies a psychosocial hazard as one that arises from, or relates to:

- the design or management of work
- a work environment
- plant (equipment) at a workplace
- workplace interactions and behaviour

that may cause psychological harm, regardless of whether it also causes physical harm.

What are some examples of a psychosocial hazard?

All workers have duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. It's important that we all take the time to identify psychosocial hazards and work together to implement controls. Some examples of psychosocial hazards that may be present within your workplace include:

- high workload or job demands - such as unachievable task deadlines, expectations and responsibilities, unpredictable shift hours or work shift structures, workers performing multiple roles or rosters that do not allow adequate time for workers to recover
- low workloads or job demands - highly repetitive and monotonous work
- exposure to traumatic events - such as emergency responders to an incident, experiencing, witnessing or investigating a serious near miss, injury, or workplace death
- role conflict or lack of role clarity – such as uncertainty around role tenures, tasks, and work schedules

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- low job control - unable to speak up about the work that is done or WHS issues
- conflict or poor workplace relationships - frequent interpersonal conflict, harmful workplace behaviours
- poor support from supervisors and managers - inadequate information, advice or help with work tasks, resolving issues or accessing necessary equipment and resources
- poor co-worker support - inadequate information, advice and help to complete tasks
- workplace violence
- hazardous physical working environments - the environment evokes a physiological or stress response. For example, hot and or cold working environments and or exposure to biological and or chemical agents.
- remote or isolated work - limited access to other people or reliable communication and or working alone
- poor organisational change consultation - poor consultation, insufficient information on the impacts of changes within the workplace on WHS and or performance
- bullying – repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers
- harassment including sexual harassment - single or repeated incidents or forms of harassment.

How to identify psychosocial hazards in your workplace

There are many ways psychosocial hazards can be identified in your workplace, some examples include:

- having conversations with workers, supervisors, and health and safety specialists
- inspecting the workplace to see how work is carried out, noting any rushing, and delays.
- noticing how people interact with each other during work activities.
- observing a tolerance for inappropriate behaviour. For example, are behaviours like name-calling, teasing, racist, sexual, or gendered jokes or vilification, crude language, swearing or hazing new or young workers, ignored, or tolerated?
- determining if workers were not adequately informed about workplace changes.

Controls for psychosocial hazards

Your workplace should have consulted, considered, and implemented controls related to psychosocial hazards. If you are unsure what these controls are, ask your supervisors. Otherwise head to the Code of practice – managing psychosocial hazards at work, visit the NSW Resources Regulator website for more information or call 1300 814 609.

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Reporting incidents related to psychosocial hazards to the Regulator

Under WHS legislation, any incident that results in a notifiable injury or illness must be reported to the NSW Resources Regulator. An incident is notifiable if it results in a physical injury or illness where:

- immediate admission into a hospital as an in-patient is required for any duration
- immediate treatment is not readily available because the incident site is rural or remote or specialist treatment is not available
- treatment would be required but was not received by the person as the person refuses treatment
- a person (supported by a medical certificate) is, or is likely to be, unfit for a continuous period of at least 7 days, to perform their usual activities at work.

What happens if the workplace has not notified the Regulator of an incident? Can a worker or a colleague contact the Regulator?

Yes, a worker or colleague can contact the Regulator. Call 1300 814 609 or complete the bullying and inappropriate conduct in the workplace form on our [website](#). It is important when completing the form to provide specific examples and any evidence available. When describing the incident, it is important to include specific behaviours, dates, locations, and witnesses, and include items such as diary entries, emails, texts and internal work health and safety notifications to support your notification.

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