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Psychosocial Hazards

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Scope

- What are Psychosocial Hazards

- Managing Psychosocial Hazards

- Responding to a Psychosocial Hazard

- Consultation

This Training package is delivered to assist all staff and workers in understanding and managing Psychosocial Hazards in the workplace
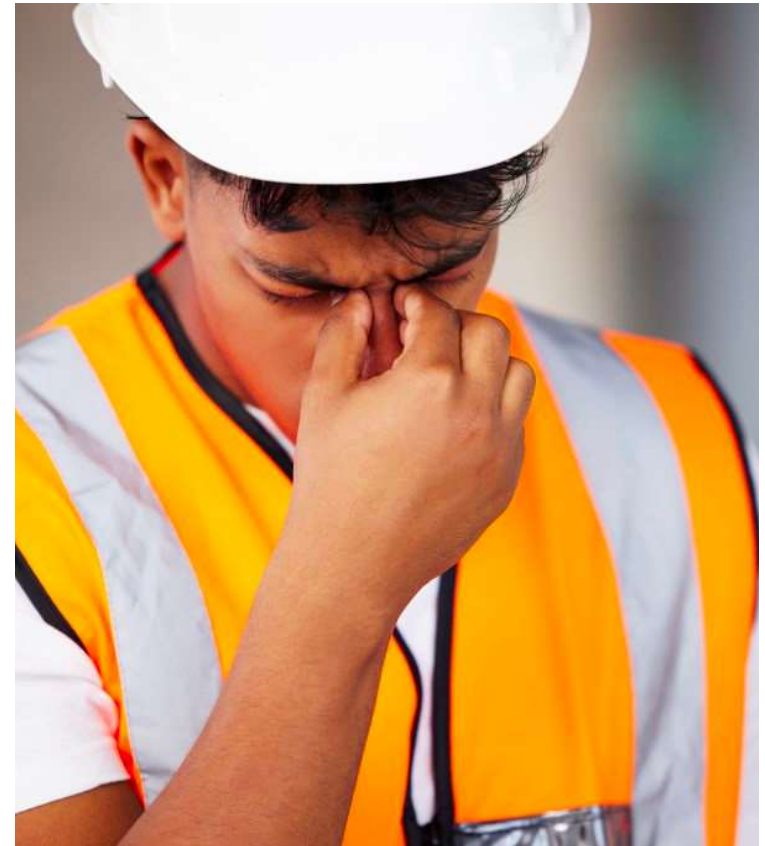
What are Psychosocial Hazards?

Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response which in turn can lead to psychological or physical harm.

EXAMPLES INCLDUE:

- High and/or low job demands
- Low job control
- Poor support
- Low role clarity
- Poor organisational change
- Remote or isolated work
- Poor environmental conditions
- Exposure to traumatic events
- Violence and aggression
- Bullying
- Harassment including sexual harassment
- Low reward and recognition
- Poor organisational justice
- Poor workplace relationships

Managing Psychosocial Hazards

What is Required to Manage Psychosocial Hazards ?

Your organisation shall manage psychosocial hazards including ensuring the provision and maintenance of :

- Safe systems of work
- A safe working environment
- The safe use, handling, and storage of plant, structures and substances

- Adequate access to welfare facilities at work
- Necessary information, training, instruction or supervision of workers, and
- The health of workers and the conditions at the workplace are monitored to ensure any risks remain adequately controlled.

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HOW WILL PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS BE MANAGED?

- **It is very important that all Psychosocial Hazards are managed effectively and efficiently by PCBUs.**

- PCBUs has a duty to exercise due diligence to ensure that the business complies with the WHS Act and WHS Regulation. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure that the business has and uses appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks of psychosocial hazards that are likely to cause harm.

- PCBU's should manage psychosocial risks by first assessing the risks, then identifying how to control the hazards and risks , then lastly conducting systematic reviews to ensure the controls that have been put in place remain effective and efficient.

- PCBUs are not required to manage personal health issues or stressors that are not work-related (e.g. family or personal financial issues). However, where a worker chooses to inform their PCBU of a pre-existing psychological injury, or if the PCBU otherwise knows of the pre-existing psychological injury, PCBUs should ensure psychosocial hazards do not create further harm, so far as is reasonably practicable.

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HOW WILL PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS BE MANAGED?

- **How?**

- PCBUs will complete a [risk assessment](#) to identify psychosocial hazards which may arise from the work context or work content. Once a risk assessment has been conducted you will then identify where a risk of a psychosocial hazards exists. Upon identification you will then implement control measures to best eliminate hazards and minimise risks.
- Controls are implemented using the hierarchy or hazard control and are tailored to your business size, type, and work activities.
- Consultation will then occur, and workers will be given the opportunity to have input into control measures and identify any issues or concerns they may have.
- Control measures will then be reviewed to ensure they remain effective. PCBUs will achieve this by conducting site inspections, task observations, equipment checks and a variety of other processes.

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Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards

It is important to understand how to not only manage psychosocial Hazards in the workplace but identify them. The next few slides will explain the 4-step process to identifying Psychosocial risks

The first step in the risk management process is to identify the psychosocial hazards which may arise from the work context or work content. This involves identifying the aspects of work and situations that could potentially harm people and why these may be occurring.

- **Step One – Identifying Psychosocial Risks**

It is important to identify reasonably foreseeable psychosocial hazards that could give rise to risks to health and safety. Some Psychosocial hazards can arise from or relate to:

- The design or management of work (e.g., the way tasks or jobs are designed, organised and managed)

- A work environment (e.g., a requirement to undertake duties in hazardous environments),

- Plant at a workplace (e.g., the equipment), or

- Workplace interactions or behaviours (e.g., social factors at work and the way workers and others behave, including work-related bullying, work-related violence and aggression, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment such as harassment due to age, disability or race)

Managing Psychosocial Hazards

Step Two – Assessing the Risk

Conducting the psychosocial risk assessment will help identify if a risk of a psychosocial hazards exists. When assessing the risk arising from psychosocial hazards, the following matters should be considered:

O1	The seriousness of the risk (considering both the consequences for affected workers and others and the likelihood of harm occurring
O2	Which workers are most at risk and affected
O3	The if risks are organisational–wide or apply to specific groups of workers or work tasks
O4	What controls are currently used (if any), how effective they are
O5	What controls could reduce the risk(s) to the lowest practical level, and
O6	The priority for action
O7	It is unclear if the psychosocial hazards may result in harm or how they may interact with each other to produce a new or more significant risk(s) of harm, or
O8	Changes that are planned, or underway that may impact the effectiveness of controls.

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Step 3 – Controlling the Risk

Under the WHS Act, the PCBU has a duty to ensure health and safety of all workers. This means that you must eliminate risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks to health and safety, the risks must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable. To achieve this, you will implement control measures in accordance with the hierarchy of controls
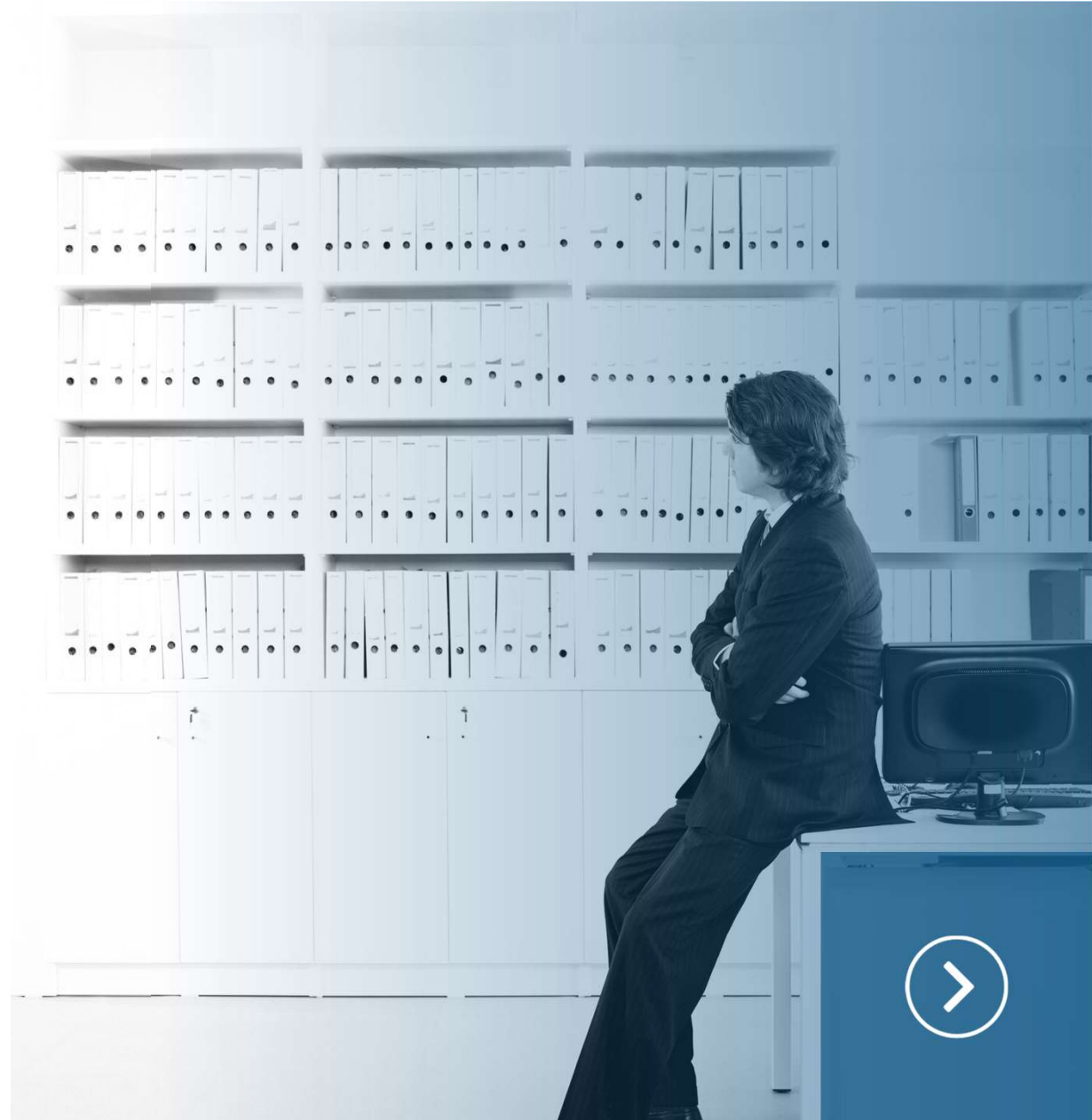
To assist workers and management personnel to decide which control measures to implement for psychosocial risks, Table 3 - S3.3 of **Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work Code of Practice 2022** can be used. Table 3 details the matters to consider when determining control measures associated with Psychosocial Hazards.

An Example is available below:

Table 3: *Matters to have regard to when determining control measures for psychosocial risk*

The duration, frequency, and severity of the exposure of workers and other persons to psychosocial hazards	The following factors will help determine suitable control measures: • how long workers are exposed to psychosocial hazards (e.g. poor organisation change management over weeks or months) • how often they are exposed (e.g. long shift patterns of remote and isolated work) • how severe the exposure may be (e.g. exposure to sexual harassment or a traumatic event). Risk control measures that reduce these factors will be the most effective at eliminating or minimising the risk.
How the psychosocial hazards may interact or combine	Understanding how interacting hazards can increase or change psychosocial risk is important when determining appropriate control measures. This is because psychosocial risk can increase when workers are exposed to a combination of psychosocial hazards. Risk control measures may be implemented that reduce exposure to one or more interacting hazards in order to minimise the risk.

Managing Psychosocial Hazards

Step 4 – Maintaining and reviewing control measures

When it comes to maintenance of controls measures , the PCBU must ensure control measures are effective and are maintained so they remain effective. This includes ensuring control measures are, and remain, fit for purpose; suitable for the nature and duration of the work; and are installed, set up and used correctly.

Staff and workers at the business who are responsible for implementing control measures should decide what maintenance control measures will require when the controls are implemented and establish a schedule for routine checks and maintenance

Reviewing Control Measures

Reviews can be used to check whether:

- The approach to systematic work health and safety management is effective
- Hazards and risks are being effectively controlled
- The organisation is meeting its WHS obligations, including for due diligence, and
- There are opportunities for improvement.

The business will review control measures to ensure they remain effective. You will achieve this by conducting site inspections, task observations, equipment checks and a variety of other processes.

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Managing Psychosocial Hazards

Step 4 – Maintaining and reviewing control measures

Review Obligations

The PCBU will review and, as necessary, revise control measures:

- If a control measure does not adequately control the risk, it was implemented to manage
- Before a change at work that is likely to give rise to a new or different risk to health or safety (e.g., a change to the work environment or systems of work)
- Where a new relevant hazard or risk is identified
- Where consultation indicates a review is necessary, or
- When a HSR requests a review.

Questions to consider during a review may include:

Are the control measures working effectively, without creating new risks?

Have workers reported that they find certain work characteristics to be stressful?

Have all psychosocial hazards been identified?

Have psychosocial hazards or risks changed or are they different to what was previously assessed?

Are workers actively involved in the risk management process?

Are workers openly raising health and safety concerns and reporting problems promptly?

Has instruction and training been provided to all relevant workers?

Are there any upcoming changes that are likely to result in a worker being exposed to psychosocial hazards?

Are new control measures available that might better control the risks?

Have risks been eliminated or minimised as far as is reasonably practicable?

Responding to a Psychosocial Risk or Incident

Individual workers may report or raise psychosocial hazards directly with management or with their HSRs who can raise issues on behalf of the work group. Early reporting of psychosocial hazards is encouraged so hazards can be managed before they cause harm.

There are various ways workers may report or raise psychosocial hazards, including :

| Discussions with supervisors | Incident report forms | Emails or text messages | Advising their HSR(s), WHS Committee, and/or union representatives | Letters of complaint or grievance | Medical certificates, OR | Workers' compensation claims |

There are various ways workers may report or raise psychosocial hazards, including:

| Act Promptly | ENSURE IMMEDIATE SAFETY | TREAT ALL MATTERS SERIOUSLY | USE A TRAUMA – INFORMED APPROACH | MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY | Be Neutral | Support all parties |

Further principles can be found in table 4 of Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work Code of Practice 2022

Responding to a Psychosocial Risk or Incident Cont'd

Some principles that can be applied when responding to reports, complaints or incidents relating to Psychosocial Hazards which may allow for an efficient and complete process. Some of these principles are listed below

Consultation

Consulting with workers

It is important that all organisations consult, so far as is reasonably practicable, with workers who carry out work for the business or undertaking and who are (or are likely to be) directly affected by hazards. This allows for workers to have a better understanding of the tasks they are carrying out and hazards and risks that may be associated with those tasks. Consultation also allows workers to raise issues and/or concerns and to improve their understanding of how the business will apply policies and procedures to allow for a safe working environment for all workers.

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Effective Consultation

Effective consultation with workers improves decision-making about health and safety matters and assists in reducing work-related injuries and illness. Workers can identify tasks or aspects of their work that cause or expose them to psychosocial hazards and may have practical suggestions or potential solutions to address those hazards. For example, workers may have ideas to improve work design to minimise the risks of psychological injury.

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When can consultation occur?

Consultation can occur whenever a hazard or risk is identified or when workers need to be informed of any specific requirements relating to the tasks they are undertaking.

How will you be consulted?

Consultation can come in many forms, but some of the ways in which the PCBU will consult with workers will be through:

- Toolbox talks
- Daily prestart meetings
- During daily site inspections (if an issue is noticed or requires to be raised)

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Some other examples of consultation methods include

- Focus groups,
- worker surveys, WHS committee meetings,
- consultative committees, or team meetings and/or individual discussions

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Conclusion

You should now have a better understanding of Psychosocial Hazards and How to effectively manage them within the workplace.

Further information on the information delivered in this package can be found in the Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work Code of Practice 2022

Oversight Consulting has a variety of policies and procedures to assist your organisation in managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace. If you would like further information on these policies and procedures, please speak to the consultant delivering your training package

Questions

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Thank You

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