



PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARD MANAGEMENT

Recognising and managing risks in the workplace that may lead to physical or psychological injury is an essential part of creating a safe, healthy and productive workplace.

Employers and others who meet the definition of a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU), have legal obligations under work health and safety laws to eliminate or minimise risks in their workplace so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes psychosocial hazards.

Psychosocial hazards:

Psychosocial hazards arise from, or are related to elements of the workplace, that may result in harm. They include the design and management of work, the work environment, the use of plant and machinery and workplace interactions and behaviours.

Psychological harm or injuries from psychosocial hazards include conditions such as anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and sleep disorders.

Physical injuries from psychosocial hazards include musculoskeletal injuries, chronic disease, and physical injury following fatigue and error related workplace incidents.

Common psychosocial hazards include:

- job demands
- bullying
- poor support
- low job control
- traumatic events
- isolated work
- poor organisational justice
- role conflict
- harassment
- violence and aggression
- lack of role clarity
- sexual harassment
- poor work relationships
- poor physical environment

How to manage psychosocial risks

A psychosocial risk is a risk to health and safety arising from a psychosocial hazard. PCBUs should use the risk management process to identify and manage risks:

1. Identify the psychosocial hazards
2. Assess the associated risks
3. Control the risks, and
4. Monitor, review and evaluate the control measures.

PCBUs must consider the following when determining control measures for psychosocial risks:

- The duration, frequency, or severity of exposure of workers and other persons to psychosocial hazards
- How the psychosocial hazards may interact or combine
- The design of work, including job demands and tasks
- The systems or work, including how work is managed, organised and supported, and
- The design and layout, and environmental conditions of the workplace.

For further guidance, refer to [the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011](#) (section 55D).

Risk management requires consultation:

See the [Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination Code of Practice](#) for guidance on consultation requirements.

Where to get help

Examples of psychosocial risk management

Note: Each workplace needs to work through their own risk management steps. The examples below demonstrate simplified approaches.

Identify – Steve owns a small business with 15 workers. He informs workers about [psychosocial hazards](#) and asks them what they have observed in the workplace. Steve also looks at data such as workplace absences, errors & incident trends. Through this process, he identifies job demands, bullying and poor support as hazards.

Assess – Steve assesses each hazard using a risk assessment template. He asks for worker input on the assessment to ensure the assessment's accuracy. He identifies that each hazard poses a medium and high risk. Steve captures and saves worker responses and the risk assessments used in the process.

Control – Steve looks at ways to control each risk and implements several controls. These include allowing additional time for tasks to be completed, reducing current work until new staff are hired to support workloads, providing improved information and training to ensure workers understand processes and setting clear expectations on staff behaviours.

Review – To ensure the controls remain effective, Steve sets out a review schedule for each hazard's controls and invites workers to raise concerns earlier if needed. He also checks to ensure that each control is continually implemented and maintained. Steve implements a biannual survey for workplace safety and control effectiveness, incorporating a review of incident trends, complaint outcomes, and workplace absences at the same time. Steve also adds the psychosocial hazards to his risk register to keep track of risk assessment activities.

For more in-depth guidance, refer to the [Work Health and Safety \(Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice\)](#). This Code sets out the minimum requirements for workplaces in meeting their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

The [WorkSafe ACT Psychosocial hazards webpage](#) provides further guidance on how to identify and manage psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

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