

MIND YOUR HEAD

Psychosocial Hazards Toolkit



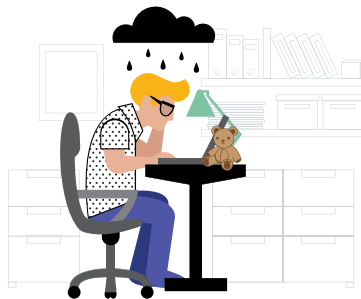
We're taking action to protect workplace mental health

Work is a significant factor in people's mental health. A mentally healthy workplace takes positive steps to prevent harm by identifying mental health hazards, managing risks from an early stage, and supporting recovery, just like we would with physical hazards at work.

Mental health hazards injure thousands of workers each year and are the fastest growing type of workplace injury. In this toolkit we identify common hazards and what to do about them.

- Poor psychological health and safety costs Australian organisations \$6 billion per annum in lost productivity
- It increases staff turnover
- Reduces productivity
- Increases sick leave and presenteeism
- Increases workers' compensation claims
- Extends return to work periods

1 in 9
compensation
claims are for
mental stress/injury



During COVID-19
almost **1 in 5**
COVID related claims were
for psychological injury

Common workplace psychosocial hazards/work-related factors include (often these are found in combination):

1. Low job control
2. High and low job demands
3. Poor support
4. Poor workplace relationships
5. Low role clarity
6. Poor organisational change management
7. Low recognition and reward
8. Poor organisational justice
9. Poor environmental conditions
10. Remote and isolated work
11. Violent or traumatic events



4 Steps for Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment

Step 1 – hazards can be identified by:

- having conversations with colleagues, supervisors and your union;
- noting if work is rushed, has delays or if there are work backlogs;
- noticing how people interact with each other during work activities;
- reviewing relevant information and records including incident reports, workers' compensation claims, staff surveys, absenteeism and staff turnover data; and
- using surveys to gather information from workers, supervisors and managers. See our [checklist here](#).

Step 3 – control risks

Implement the most effective control measures that are reasonably practicable in the circumstances and ensure they remain effective over time. To understand this in more detail see our [guidance paper here](#).

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the entire hazard, eliminate as many risks associated with the hazard and use other control measures to minimize risks including by:

- altering the system of work;
- altering workplace layout;
- altering workplace environment;
- changing the object/ tools used in the task; and/or
- implementing work methods or procedures to limit exposure to a hazard (administrative controls) which may include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Step 2 - assess risks

Understand the nature of the harm that could be caused by the hazards, how severe the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening.

Step 4 – continue to review hazards and control measures

Ensure they are working as planned by reviewing them regularly at your health and safety committee meetings and by speaking with affected colleagues.

A review must take place in consultation with affected employees and their representatives:

- when the control measure is not effective;
- before a workplace change that is likely to give rise to a new or different health and safety risk;
- if a new hazard or risk is identified;
- if the results of consultation indicate that a review is necessary; or
- if a Health and Safety Representative requests a review.

By identifying, assessing, controlling, and reviewing psychosocial risks in the workplace, workers, their unions, employers and leaders, together can create mentally safe systems of work, and mentally safe workplaces.

And remember...

Employers have an obligation to consult with employees through their unions on matters that affect their mental health and safety. Employees have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and to not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons.

Employers must systematically and comprehensively:

- identify work-related hazards and risks;
- assess risks (where the degree of risk and suitable controls are not already known);
- implement effective control measures to eliminate hazards or minimise risks. The main focus on the good design and effective management of work, creating safe systems of work and ensuring appropriate communication and behaviour; and
- consult effectively with your workers, their representatives and others where required.

What to do if an injury occurs?

If you, or someone else, is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, contact emergency services on 000.

For 24-hour, 7 day telephone mental health support call:

- ☎ Lifeline - 13 11 14
- ☎ Beyond Blue - 1300 22 4636
- ☎ Suicide call back service - 1300 659 467

Right to Workers' Compensation

Anybody injured or made ill at work has a right to worker's compensation, including paid leave and compensation for medical costs. This applies to both physical and mental injuries and can occur at the workplace or offsite. Each state and territory has its own workers' compensation scheme (WorkCover), although if you work for a select number of large national employer, you may be covered by Comcare.

For more information on making a Workers' Compensation Claim, FAQ's and helpful resources, see our [guidance here](#).

Visit mindyourhead.org.au for more information.