

Health & Safety Management Plan

Appendix B – Specific Policies and Procedures

4. Stress Management Policy

Policy Statement

We recognise our responsibility to actively reduce and manage stress in the workplace. Stress may arise from both personal and organisational sources. We have a degree of control only over the latter, and these guidelines provide a framework for stress management in the workplace.

Purpose

To assist workers to understand the causes of stress, and work together in ways that encourage positive responses to work demands.

Responsibilities

The manager is responsible for:

- Providing up-to-date and accessible information on stress.
- Adjusting the physical environment, workload, task design, pacing of work and work schedules to alleviate significant stress/distress in consultation with the person concerned.
- Making free specialist counselling available for workers.
- Ensuring workers take their breaks and use annual leave.
- Ensuring workers do not work an excessive number of overtime hours.

Workers are responsible for:

- Managing time and realistically prioritising tasks.
- Taking regular, necessary breaks during the day.
- Taking annual leave.
- Taking leave accrued as time in lieu as soon as possible.
- Not working excessively long hours.
- Discussing with a manager the issues causing stress, along with any suggested solutions.
- Seeking advice and help from others – if possible talk to partners, friends, colleagues, a professional counsellor or manager.

Common signs of stress

- Headaches, feeling tired, or having difficulty sleeping.
- Worrying a lot, feeling anxious and tense for no explained reason.
- Having difficulty concentrating, finding it hard to make decisions.
- Lower level of confidence, making mistakes, forgetting things.
- Feeling impatient and irritable, drinking more alcohol, smoking more.

“Stress is inevitable: distress is not”

Prevention

- Allow workers to participate in collaborative decision making.
- Allow workers to exercise as much autonomy and control as is practical.
- Provide training to enable work to be done most effectively.
- Consider job design, job descriptions and performance targets with the aim of reducing unnecessary stressors.
- Consult with workers to identify stressors in the workplace.
- Promote activities that make the workplace healthier, more stimulating and more fun.
- Carefully match people to jobs by considering their individual skills, capabilities and needs.

Early intervention

- Act immediately if a worker seems overly stressed.
- Explore whether their stress is in any way job related, discuss ways of alleviating it in the short term initially, and then focus on the sources of stress to consider long-term solutions.
- Short-term solutions could include sharing tasks amongst other workers, taking leave, or adopting flexible or reduced hours.
- Long-term solutions should aim to eliminate or minimise the cause of stress where possible – the preventative strategies outlined above should be used.