



Psychosocial health and safety at work

Guide and tool for effective
psychosocial risk management



Government
of South Australia

SafeWork SA

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Using this guide and tool

What's in this guide and tool?

This guide and tool is designed to enable persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)* to:

- assess the maturity of their business or organisation with regards to meeting their obligation to manage psychosocial risks
- identify psychosocial hazards
- assess the risks to worker health and safety
- select and / or review control measures.

**A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has a primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of workers while they are at work in the business or undertaking and others who may be affected by the carrying out of work, such as visitors.*

Psychosocial risk management Self-assessment tool: System maturity

PCBUs may wish to use this to conduct their own assessment of their systems for managing psychosocial hazards and risks.

The obligations to manage psychosocial risks include a requirement to identify hazards and risks and implement and review control measures. If you identify these as areas for improvement in your systems self-assessment, step by step guidance on how to undertake these steps is outlined in this guide and tool.

Psychosocial risk management Tool for conducting and recording your risk management process and plan

Deciding on the scope of your risk management process and plan

Where possible, conduct separate assessments and risk management plans for elements of your workforce that you expect to be dissimilar from others in terms of their risk profile and appropriate controls. This may require a consideration of the types of jobs that they do, their work patterns and individual and team characteristics.

This is because many businesses and organisations have psychosocial risk profiles that vary between work groups, functional areas and occupational groups. This means that different elements of your business or organisation may need a different mix of measures to control their unique psychosocial hazards and risks.

More information

A glossary can help you understand psychosocial hazards and other terminology relevant to psychosocial health and safety. A glossary of terms is at the back of this guide.

- **SafeWork SA website**

Have a look at our website for more information as to how to meet your legal obligations to manage psychosocial hazards in relation to hazard identification, assessing risk, selecting and reviewing control measures and consulting with your workers to ensure their experiences and needs are well-considered.

- **SA Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work**
- **SA Code of Practice: Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment**

These Codes of Practice are particularly helpful to **identify control measures** for different types of hazards. However, please remember that under the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA), PCBUs are required to apply the hierarchy of controls to manage psychosocial hazards. This means that, wherever feasible, you should implement controls that minimise the likelihood that workers are exposed to work-related psychosocial hazards (work-related stressors).

The slide features a solid blue background. In the top right corner, there is a cluster of overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue and white. In the bottom left corner, there is a single 3D cube-like shape composed of white, dark blue, and greyish-blue faces.

Psychosocial risk management

Self-assessment tool:
System maturity

This assessment tool aims to help PCBU¹ (of any size), employers, managers, and supervisors to:

- assess the maturity of their business or organisation with regards to meeting their obligation to manage **psychosocial risks (PSR)** and
- identify opportunities for improvement.

Improving how PSRs are managed can:

- reduce the risk of physical and psychological injuries and illnesses
- provide business benefits (e.g. improved worker health, morale, productivity, and retention).

¹ A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) has a primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of workers while they are at work in the business or undertaking and others who may be affected by the carrying out of work, such as visitors.



Using this tool

- Consult with a cross-section of workers and contractors to help get a true indication of how your workplace is progressing with developing better psychosocial health and safety systems.
- Fill out the assessment tool, noting which column has the most ticks.

Good practice zone - you are likely to have effective systems and practices in place and will need to maintain these.

Approaching good practice zone - you are on the right track, and there are opportunities for improvement.

Improvement required zone - it is likely that you are not managing psychosocial hazards effectively. Significant improvements are likely to be required to prevent negative impacts on workers.

- Once the checklist is completed, review your areas for improvement and decide on actions to be taken.
- Keep a record of what needs to be done and how it will be implemented.
- Start with the areas where your rating was in the improvement required **red** zone, followed by those in the working towards a systematic approach **amber** zone and good practice **green** zone.

Find more information and resources about psychosocial risk management:

- [SafeWork SA website](#)
- [SA Code of Practice for managing psychosocial hazards at work](#)
- [SA sexual and gender-based Code of Practice](#)

Improvement required	Approaching good practice	Good practice
PCBU/Officer² commitment to managing PSR <i>Legislation: WHS Act 2012 – Sections 19 and 27</i>		
No officers and managers have taken steps to understand their legal obligations to manage PSR	Some officers and managers understand the scope of their legal obligations to manage PSR	All officers and managers receive regular updates on PSR activities, processes and outcomes in their organisation
No officers and managers have taken steps to understand the nature of PSR and risks to health and safety	Some officers and managers understand the nature of PSR and risks to health and safety	All officers and managers have been educated on the nature of PSR and risks to health and safety
No resources (time, money, personnel) allocated for PSR management (e.g. for hazard reporting, consultation, training and risk monitoring)	Limited resources (time, money, personnel) allocated for PSR management (e.g. for hazard reporting, consultation, training and risk monitoring)	Adequate resources (time, money, personnel) allocated for PSR management (e.g. for hazard reporting, consultation, training and risk monitoring)
PSR management is never an agenda item on WHS or other governance committees	PSR management is an agenda item on WHS or other governance committees only when an incident (e.g. complaint with reputational impact) occurs	PSR management is a standing agenda item on WHS or other governance and executive committees
No officer or manager involvement in proactively addressing PSR (including authorising controls)	Actions are taken (e.g. review of controls, updated risk assessment) on a reactive rather than proactive basis (e.g. after a complaint)	Officers and managers proactively ensure that hazard identification, risk assessment, implementation and regular review of controls occurs
		Key performance indicators related to injury and illness prevention are set and monitored

Comments:

² An officer is a person who makes, or helps make a decision which affects either the whole or a major part of a business or undertaking. If a person has the capacity to significantly affect the financial standing of the organisation, they are recognised as an officer. Officers for a PCBU have a specific duty to exercise due diligence to ensure they meet their own WHS obligations. Furthermore, they have to be proactive in ensuring the PCBU complies with their duties under the WHS Act. They are responsible for actively fulfilling the duty and should not assume that someone else has taken care of health and safety outcomes.

Improvement required	Approaching good practice	Good practice
Consulting with workers and other duty holders (supply chain partners³) about managing PSR <i>Legislation: WHS Act 2012 – Sections 46, 47, 48 and 49</i>		
No consultation with workers about managing PSR (hazard identification, risk assessment, identifying, implementing and reviewing controls)	Workers are consulted on some but not all PSR management processes (e.g. hazard identification but not selection and review of controls)	Workers consistently participate in hazard identification, risk assessment, identifying, implementing and reviewing controls
Workers not consulted when PCBU plans to instigate functional or structural change, when policies or procedures relevant to PSR management are designed or reviewed, when exposure to PSR is apparent and / or when there are indications of work-related harm to worker health and safety	Inconsistent or ad hoc consultation with workers when PCBU plans to instigate functional or structural change, when policies or procedures relevant to PSR management are designed or reviewed, when exposure to PSR is apparent and / or when there are indications of work-related harm to worker health and safety	Workers are consistently and proactively consulted when PCBU plans to instigate functional or structural change, when policies or procedures relevant to PSR management are designed or reviewed, when exposure to PSR is apparent and / or when there are indications of work-related harm to worker health and safety
Supply chain partners not consulted about managing PSR	Supply chain partners are consulted on some but not all PSR management processes (e.g. hazard identification but not selection and review of controls)	Supply chain partners are consistently consulted about hazard identification, risk assessment, identifying, implementing and reviewing controls
(if applicable) The HSR is not consulted about managing PSR	(if applicable) Limited weight is given to the views of the HSR about managing PSR	(if applicable) HSR views are valued and taken into account
Workers are not consulted about organisational change and any associated PSR	Workers are consulted about organisational change but there is inadequate consideration of any associated PSR	Workers are always consulted about organisational change and any associated PSR

Comments:

³ Supply chain partners may include, but not limited to, suppliers, subcontractors, transport operators, landlords.

Improvement required	Approaching good practice	Good practice
How does your workplace identify PSRs?⁴ <i>Legislation: WHS Regulations 2012 – Regulation 34 – Duty to identify hazards.</i>		
No PSR identification / reporting process or system has been implemented	Some PSR identification / reporting process or system is in place (e.g. employee surveys, team and/or 1:1 meetings), but workers are not well-informed about how to recognise / report PSR	PSR identification / reporting process or system is in place, (e.g. employee surveys, team and/or 1:1 meetings), workers are educated about how to recognise PSR, and workers are well-informed about how to report PSR
PCBU is not aware of the presence of PSR to which workers may be exposed	Ad hoc or incidental identification of PSR trends and issues which is not routinely documented	Analysis of PSR trends and issues is routinely conducted and documented
No workers are educated about how to recognise and report PSR	Workers report PSR but do not always receive feedback on actions taken by the PCBU in response	Workers report hazards and always receive feedback on actions taken by the PCBU in response

Comments:

⁴ A PSR identification process or system includes direct worker consultation through 1:1 conversations, team meetings or focus groups, a WHS hazard reporting system, routine analysis of trends from this system along with routine analysis of incident reports and analysis of employee survey data and other workforce data. The system should also include measures to ensure workers are educated about PSR and how to report hazards.

Improvement required	Approaching good practice	Good practice
How are the risks of PSRs assessed? <i>Legislation: WHS Regulations 2012 – Regulation 55D – Relevant matters for controlling PSR</i>		
No risk assessment undertaken / recorded or other informal consideration of the PSR profile Generic WHS risk assessment tool (e.g. that assesses likelihood consequence) but specific PSR risk factors not assessed	PCBU has an understanding of its PSR profile or has undertaken a risk assessment but without consideration of all of the following: • how PSR interact • frequency, duration and severity of exposure • effectiveness of existing controls • the work environment • how workers are trained and supervised • the design and systems of work • workplace behaviours and interactions • risks to both physical and psych health and safety.	Documented risk assessment with adequate consideration of all of the following: • how PSR interact • frequency, duration and severity of exposure • effectiveness of existing controls • the work environment • how workers are trained and supervised • the design and systems of work • workplace behaviours and interactions • risks to both physical and psych health and safety.

Comments:

Improvement required	Approaching good practice	Good practice
How are PSRs controlled? <i>Legislation: WHS Regulations 2012 – Regulation 36 – Hierarchy of control measures. Regulation 37 – Maintenance of control measures. Regulation 38 - Review of control measures. Regulation 55D – Relevant matters to consider in selecting control measures</i>		
No controls are in place OR some administrative or PPE controls ⁵ are in place	Some preventative controls ⁶ are in place but most controls are administrative or PPE	Mostly preventative controls are in place (e.g. that reduce the likelihood of exposure to hazards), supplemented with administrative / PPE controls
No control measures (including policies and procedures) have been reviewed when required (e.g. during / after structural, functional and personnel changes, after complaints about hazards have been received or at the request of workers/HSR)	Some control measures (including policies and procedures) are reviewed sometimes (e.g. during / after structural, functional and personnel changes, after complaints about hazards have been received or at the request of workers/HSR)	Control measures (including policies and procedures) are routinely reviewed (e.g. during / after structural, functional and personnel changes, after complaints about hazards have been received or at the request of workers/HSR)
No allocated responsibility for a duty holder to maintain, monitor and review effectiveness / adequacy of control measures	A responsible duty holder is identified to maintain, monitor and review effectiveness / adequacy of control measures but performs this role in an ad hoc manner	A responsible duty holder is identified to maintain, monitor and review effectiveness / adequacy of control measures and conducts this in a systematic manner
No formal means in place to ensure that workers / HSR are made aware of their right to request that control measures be reviewed	Workers / HSR are aware of their right to request that control measures be reviewed but rarely or never request it (e.g. due to lack of confidence)	Workers / HSR are aware of their right to request that control measures be reviewed and have displayed confidence about doing so
	Not all relevant matters have been taken into consideration when determining control measures (e.g. frequency and duration of exposure, the design of work and the workplace, how hazards interact, how workers interact and training and instruction provided to workers)	All relevant matters have been taken into consideration when determining control measures (e.g. frequency and duration of exposure, the design of work and the workplace, how hazards interact, how workers interact and training and instruction provided to workers)

Comments:

⁵ Such as policies, procedures, EAP counselling services and other reactive measures that put the onus of responsibility on the individual worker to cope with PSR

⁶ Preventative controls are those that focus on changing the nature of work performed and the working environment and conditions.

Improvement required	Approaching good practice	Good practice
How are workers⁷ trained and supervised regarding managing PSR? <i>Legislation: WHS Regulations 2012 – Regulation 39 – Provision of information, training and instruction</i>		
Workers receive no information, training and instruction about PSR in general	Some, but not all workers receive information, training and instruction about PSR in general	All workers receive information, training and instruction about PSR in general
Workers receive no information, training and instruction about specific PSR inherent of their work and workplace	Some, but not all workers receive information, training and instruction about specific PSR inherent of their work and workplace	All workers receive information, training and instruction about specific PSR inherent of their work and workplace
Workers receive no information, training and instruction about how PSR are managed in their workplace (including their right to be consulted)	Some, but not all workers receive information, training and instruction about how PSR are managed in their workplace (including their right to be consulted)	All workers receive information, training and instruction about how PSR are managed in their workplace (including their right to be consulted)
Workers receive no information, training and instruction about their responsibilities as duty holders	Some, but not all workers receive information, training and instruction about their responsibilities as duty holders	All workers receive information, training and instruction about their responsibilities as duty holders
Workers receive information, training and instruction about managing PSR in a way that is not readily understandable by them	Some, but not all workers receive information, training and instruction about managing PSR in a way that is readily understandable by them	Workers receive information, training and instruction about managing PSR in ways that are readily understandable by them
Information, training and instruction about managing PSR is not provided by a suitably qualified person with sound subject matter knowledge	Information, training and instruction about managing PSR is not always provided by a suitably qualified person with sound subject matter knowledge	Information, training and instruction about managing PSR is provided by a suitably qualified person with good subject matter knowledge and experience
Training about PSR / managing PSR is not documented	Training about PSR / managing PSR is not always documented	Training about PSR / managing PSR is always documented
Training and instruction quality and frequency is not evaluated	Training and instruction quality and frequency is assessed but identified areas for improvement are not adequately implemented	Training and instruction quality and frequency is assessed and areas for improvement are implemented
Line managers are not adequately monitored and instructed about meeting their responsibilities to minimise exposure to PSR	Some, but not all line managers are adequately monitored and instructed about meeting their responsibilities to minimise exposure to PSR	All line managers are adequately monitored and instructed about meeting their responsibilities to minimise exposure to PSR

Comments:

⁷ Workers includes all managers / leaders at all levels of the business / organisation.

Actions:

Who: Date to be completed: Date completed:	Who: Date to be completed: Date completed:
Who: Date to be completed: Date completed:	Who: Date to be completed: Date completed:
Who: Date to be completed: Date completed:	Who: Date to be completed: Date completed:

Manager name:

Signature: Date:

The risk management steps

1

Gather and analyse information

Considering a broad range of information sources, your direct observations and the perspectives and experiences of workers helps you to accurately identify hazards and assess the risks to worker health and safety.

2

Identify psychosocial hazards and assess risks

The Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA) specify a requirement that PCBU's consider a range of factors in determining what control measures to implement. This step helps you to meet that requirement by prompting you to assess the factors that contribute to risk.

3

Select and/or review control measures

The final step is where you record:

- any new control measures that you need to implement
- any existing control measures that you need to review
- who is responsible for doing this.

WORKER CONSULTATION

Gather and analyse information

Gathering and assessing various sources of information about your workforce and workplace gives you insight into the types of psychosocial hazards they may be exposed to, the actual or potential impact and what this means for the adequacy of existing measures you may have in place.

Consider as many of the below sources of information as possible. Most importantly, consider the characteristics, experiences and views of your workers.

Deciding on the scope of your risk management process and plan

Where possible, conduct separate assessments for elements of your workforce that you expect to be dissimilar from others in terms of their risk profile and appropriate controls. This may require a consideration of the types of jobs that they do, their work patterns and individual and team characteristics.

This is because many businesses and organisations have psychosocial risk profiles that vary between work groups, functional areas and occupational groups. This means that different elements of your business or organisation may need a different mix of measures to control their unique psychosocial hazards and risks.



Scope of assessment *(number of workers/occupations/roles)*:

Sources of information	Examples of things to look for	Note any trends you see and what they may indicate about:
	PCBUs will vary in terms of what information they have to inform their risk assessment and the following sources of information should be considered if they are available	- the types of psychosocial hazards (sources of stress) to which workers are exposed - implications for worker health and safety (e.g. how would prolonged exposure impact on their health and safety?) - adequacy of any existing measures you have in place to protect workers from sources of stress.
Attendance records	- Look at whether work hours and patterns are recorded in a way that enable monitoring. Lack of adequate monitoring is an indication of poor supervisory support. - Persistent long hours are an indication of high work demands. - Consider whether there may be under-reporting of actual hours worked. - Consider whether worker's reports of actual hours worked are consistent with their productivity as this may indicate presenteeism or recording misleading attendance patterns to mask low productivity (particularly for workers who work remotely or from home).	
Sickness absence trends	Look at the rate of sick leave for a workgroup compared to the average across a unit, region or department and compared to the whole organisation. If known, the following reasons for absence are possible indications of psychosocial risk (PSR): - tension headaches or migraines - recurrent general ill-health (e.g. colds or other viruses) - fatigue - gastrointestinal illnesses - musculoskeletal injuries or conditions (e.g. tendon or muscular soreness).	
Annual leave trends	- Look at patterns of use such as taking a small amount of time off (i.e. one or two days off frequently) - this can be commonly associated with unpleasant working conditions and work-related stress. - Also look for high leave balances as an indication of persistently high work demands and / or presenteeism.	

Sources of information	Examples of things to look for	Note any trends you see and what they may indicate about:
	PCBUs will vary in terms of what information they have to inform their risk assessment and the following sources of information should be considered if they are available	- the types of psychosocial hazards (sources of stress) to which workers are exposed - implications for worker health and safety (e.g. how would prolonged exposure impact on their health and safety?) - adequacy of any existing measures you have in place to protect workers from sources of stress.
Compensation claims	Examine data regarding workers' compensation claims for: - work related stress - post traumatic stress disorder - anxiety - depression - musculoskeletal injuries or conditions. Consider the factors associated with work-related stress claims and the actions taken in the workplace to prevent further injury or illness.	
Incident and injury records	Look at dates and times that coincide with other events or trends. The pattern of small and large incidents can provide insight into the sources of stress in a workplace.	
Employee assistance program reports	Review service utilisation reports for frequency and reasons for EAP utilisation.	
Industrial relations records	This can provide insight into the level of job satisfaction in the workplace. Industrial relations disputes are frequently associated with stress in the workplace.	
Minutes of meetings	If 1:1 and/or team meetings are documented, look for unresolved and reappearing issues over time, such as workload and changes in work roles by reviewing previous minutes from workplace health and safety meetings, toolbox talks and staff meetings.	
Complaints records	Records of complaints and other reports from workers about hazards such as: - inability to take leave or other forms of respite from work at preferred times - high work demands - harmful behaviours (such as bullying, sexual harassment and aggression) - poor organisational justice - poor managerial support - poor role clarity.	

Sources of information	Examples of things to look for	Note any trends you see and what they may indicate about:
Employee opinion survey information (including exit surveys)	Look for opinions and experiences regarding: • harmful behaviours • leadership and management • reward and recognition • management of workplace conflict and complaints • change management • organisational justice (procedural, informational and interpersonal) • job security • working conditions • workplace consultation • supervisor and / or organisation's regard for health and safety • communication and involvement in decision making • control over workload • resources and support • health status • intention to leave and reasons.	• the types of psychosocial hazards (sources of stress) to which workers are exposed • implications for worker health and safety (e.g. how would prolonged exposure impact on their health and safety?) • adequacy of any existing measures you have in place to protect workers from sources of stress.
Recruitment and retention data	• Persistent inability to attract and recruit new workers may be an indication of poor organisational / industry reputation re: remuneration, conditions and culture. • Number of vacant positions. • Any data on the frequency with which workers leave and reasons for leaving. • Differences between worksites, functional areas and occupational groups. • Low retention of workers within the first 6-12 months of engagement (indicating poor pre-engagement assessment of job/organisation - person fit). • Comparisons with industry benchmarks.	
Quality and safety audits	Records of internal or external audits of the extent to which quality and safety standards are met.	

Examples of questions to ask in your direct observation of / consultation with workers

Note that organisations and businesses have a legal obligation to consult with workers throughout all steps of risk management. Gaining the opinions and experiences of a reasonable cross-section of workers is recommended.

- Are there adequate staff to complete tasks?
- Are workers under-reporting their actual work hours, such that they are working unpaid overtime?
- Are workers satisfied that they are able to take leave or other types of respite from work at their preferred times?
- Are workers satisfied about their ability to access flexible work arrangements?
- Are positions backfilled when workers are absent for extended periods?
- Do workers have the required skills, knowledge and attributes for the work they perform?
- Are workers displaying or reporting symptoms of stress, burnout, fatigue, low morale or musculoskeletal conditions (sprains and strains)?
- Are there signs of interpersonal conflict or low trust and respect?
- Is presenteeism common? (i.e. attending work despite being unwell).
- Are workers aware of what psychosocial hazards are and that they have legal protections against them?
- Are workers aware of how to report psychosocial hazards and risks?
- Do workers have confidence that their managers will take action to manage hazards and risks?
- Are workers satisfied with the way in which their managers take action to manage hazards and risks?
- Do workers have confidence that reports or complaints of harmful behaviours will be taken seriously?
- Are workers satisfied with the way in which complaints and reports of psychosocial hazards including harmful behaviours are handled?

Note any trends you see and what they may indicate about:

- the types of psychosocial hazards (sources of stress) to which workers are exposed
- implications for worker health and safety (e.g. how would prolonged exposure impact on their health and safety?)
- adequacy of any existing measures you have in place to protect workers from sources of stress.

Identify psychosocial hazards and assess risks

Based on the information you have gathered and considered in the previous step, on the following page, you can record your assessment of the risk profile for the workers or workforce you considered.

Guidance on how to rate each criteria for each hazard is included on the following page.



Hazards	Frequency of exposure Based on average for the workers in scope for the risk assessment	Duration of intermittent or persistent exposure Based on average for the workers in scope for the risk assessment	Potential or actual psychological or physical impact of exposure Based on average for the workers in scope for the risk assessment Exposures that are high frequency and long duration and acute critical incidents such as violence should be rated as high or very high risk of injury/illness	Existing preventative controls Elimination, substitution, isolation or engineering controls that prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure to hazards	Existing administrative controls Policies, procedures, education and training	Existing PPE controls Individually targeted measures that treat or compensate for harm or are the last lines of defence against harm (e.g. EAP counselling services or return to work program)	Risk rating
High job demands							
Low job control							
Poor support							
Lack of role clarity							
Poor organisational change management							
Inadequate reward and recognition							
Poor organisational justice							
Potentially traumatic events or material							
Remote or isolated work							
Poor physical environment							
Violence and aggression							
Bullying							
Harassment							
Sexual harassment							
Conflict or poor workplace relationships							
Fatigue							
Insecure work							
Intrusive surveillance							

Other relevant risk and protective factors

Please refer to the glossary for guidance on these

Are there multiple interacting hazards?

Are workers undertaking high risk work (where there is a high risk of potentially fatal accidents/errors)?

Are workers undertaking hazardous manual tasks?

Are any workers classified as potentially vulnerable workers?

Are there signs of work-related psychological and / or physical harm among your workers (including fatigue)?

Are there any protective factors which mitigate the risk of exposure to the identified psychosocial hazards?

Overall risk of harm to workers

Select the overall rating

Regardless of your overall risk rating, you should address any identified areas for improvement in how you are managing risks.

Select and/or review control measures

This is where you record information about:

- existing controls, what they are designed to address, the type of control, if its needs to be reviewed and why, and who is responsible for doing that
- additional controls required, what they are designed to address, the type of control, how urgently its needed and who is responsible for implementing it.

Note that under SA WHS legislation, organisations, and businesses must apply the hierarchy of controls to manage psychosocial hazards as far as is reasonably practicable.

See example hierarchies of control (including for harmful workplace behaviours) on the [SafeWork SA website](#).

The higher your overall risk rating, the more you should strive to implement controls that prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure to hazards.

Regardless of your risk profile, a mix of preventative, administrative and PPE controls is recommended.

Note that organisations and businesses have a legal obligation to consult with workers throughout all of the 3 steps in this tool.

Reviews of control measures must be done when:

- new hazards or risks are identified
- when requested by workers or a Health and Safety Representative
- when existing controls do not adequately limit risks to workers
- before a change in the workplace that may give risk to new hazards or increased risk.

Includes updating policies / procedures to be consistent with current good practice.



Existing controls in place	Which hazard is this primarily designed to control?	Note any other hazards that this control measure directly or indirectly addresses	Type of control Preventative controls are elimination, substitution, isolation or engineering controls that prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure	Requires review?	Reasons why review is required	Person/s responsible for review / implementation of changes

Existing controls in place	Which hazard is this primarily designed to control?	Note any other hazards that this control measure directly or indirectly addresses	Type of control Preventative controls are elimination, substitution, isolation or engineering controls that prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure	Requires review?	Reasons why review is required	Person/s responsible for review / implementation of changes

Existing controls in place	Which hazard is this primarily designed to control?	Note any other hazards that this control measure directly or indirectly addresses	Type of control Preventative controls are elimination, substitution, isolation or engineering controls that prevent or reduce the likelihood of exposure	Requires review?	Reasons why review is required	Person/s responsible for review / implementation of changes

Additional controls required	Which hazard is this primarily designed to control?	Note any other hazards that this control measure directly or indirectly addresses	Type of control	Priority	Person/s responsible for implementation

Additional controls required	Which hazard is this primarily designed to control?	Note any other hazards that this control measure directly or indirectly addresses	Type of control	Priority	Person/s responsible for implementation

Additional controls required	Which hazard is this primarily designed to control?	Note any other hazards that this control measure directly or indirectly addresses	Type of control	Priority	Person/s responsible for implementation

Glossary

Hazards

High job demands

Sustained or intense high levels of physical, mental or emotional effort which are unreasonable or chronically exceed workers' skills.

In contrast, a worker may be underutilised and stimulated – mentally and physically.

A job can also involve a combination of low or high mental, emotional and physical demands.

Low job control

Having little control or say over the work or aspects of the work including what is done, when, how, where or with whom.

Can occur where workers are engaged in insecure, precarious and contingent work arrangements (e.g casual work, labour hire, fixed-term contracts, gig economy workers).

Poor support

Inadequate support, including insufficient support from supervisors or other workers.

Not having the resources needed to do the job or support work performance.

Lack of role clarity

Unclear, inconsistent or frequently changing roles, responsibilities or expectations.

Lack of important job-related information.

Poor organisational change management

Organisational change that is poorly planned, communicated, supported or managed.

Inadequate reward and recognition

Jobs where there is an imbalance between workers' effort and recognition or rewards, both formal and informal.

Poor organisational justice

Poor organisational justice involves:

- a lack of procedural justice (fair processes to reach decisions)
- a lack of informational fairness (keeping people informed)
- a lack of interpersonal fairness (treating people with dignity and respect).

Potentially traumatic events or material

Witnessing, investigating or being exposed to confronting or distressing events or material.

A person is more likely to experience an event as traumatic when it is unexpected, is perceived as uncontrollable or is the result of intentional cruelty.

This includes indirect or vicarious exposure, which is exposure to things that have directly happened to others.

Remote or isolated work

Work that is isolated from the assistance of other persons because of the location, time or nature of the work.

Working in environments where there are long travel times, poor access to resources, or communications are limited and difficult.

Poor physical environment

Exposure to unpleasant, poor quality or hazardous working environments or conditions (such as working near unsafe machinery, hazardous manual tasks, poor air quality, extreme temperatures, high noise levels and hazardous substances)

Violence and aggression

Includes:

- verbal abuse, in person or over the telephone
- written abuse via email or text message
- harassment
- threats and intimidation
- physical or sexual assault
- malicious damage to property
- intimidation and insults
- banging, kicking, throwing or hitting items
- biting
- spitting.

Bullying

Bullying at work occurs when:

- a person or a group of people behaves unreasonably towards a worker or a group of workers at work
- this happens more than once
- this creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying behaviours include:

- abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments
- practical jokes or initiation
- unjustified criticism or complaints
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level
- denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the worker
- using the Internet, a mobile phone or a camera to hurt or embarrass someone (cyber bullying).

Harassment

Behaviour directed at a person because of a personal characteristic and that could reasonably result in a person feeling offended, humiliated or intimidated or places them in a hostile environment.

Harassment does not need to be repeated and can be a single occurrence.

Harassment can entail treating people less favourably on the basis of particular protected attributes such as gender, sexual orientation, race, disability or age.

Sexual harassment

Any unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that results in offence, humiliation or intimidation

Conflict or poor workplace relationships

Poor workplace relationships or interpersonal conflict between colleagues or from other businesses, clients or customers.

Frequent disagreements, disparaging or rude comments, either from one person or multiple people, such as from clients or customers.

A worker can be both the subject and the source of this behaviour.

Fatigue

A state of physical or mental exhaustion, or both, which reduces the ability to perform work safely and effectively.

Eventuate in situations where workers work long hours, often with high physical, mental or emotional demands. If fatigue results from psychosocial hazards eventuating, it can cause risks to the health and safety of workers and others.

Job insecurity

A state of uncertainty about continued employment due to precarious and contingent work arrangements.

Subjectively perceived threat of job loss.

Lack of assurance that their jobs will remain stable in the future.

Intrusive surveillance

Excessive surveillance methods/tools used to monitor and collect information about workers at work for the purpose of work performance monitoring.

Intrusive surveillance methods/tools can be analogue (e.g supervisor engaging in micromanagement) or technological (e.g trackable devices).

Note: surveillance of workers while at work is appropriate for the purposes of:

- monitoring workers' geographical location or movement to control risks associated with remote or isolated work, and
- managing physical and/or IT security risks in a workplace.

Other key terms

Burnout

Not a mental illness but can lead to mental illness if not managed. A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and characterised by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. The main triggers are high job demand and low resources.

Employee-like workers

Such workers are commonly referred to as 'gig' workers. These are workers who satisfy two or more of the following characteristics:

- low bargaining power
- low authority over the performance of work
- receives remuneration at or below the rate of employees performing comparable work.

Hazardous manual tasks

A hazardous manual task involves one or more of the following characteristics:

- repetitive or sustained force
- high or sudden force
- repetitive movement
- sustained or awkward posture
- exposure to vibration.

These factors (known as characteristics of a hazardous manual task) when performed for a certain duration, can directly stress the body and lead to injury.

The more characteristics that are present and the longer the exposure to the factors, the greater the risk of injury.

High risk work

High risk work refers to tasks or jobs that have a high risk of injury/illness to self or others arising from errors or accidents. This category covers jobs at construction sites, operating mobile plant including aircraft, and roles in major hazard facilities like oil refineries, chemical or explosive storage sites, or chemical manufacturing plants.

High risk work often involves using large, specialised equipment like cranes, forklifts, scaffolds or handling potentially dangerous equipment and substances like boilers, turbines, and explosives.

Interacting hazards

Work related hazards that do, or tend to co-exist. For example: High work demands and low job control; harmful behaviours and organisational injustice; low support and low role clarity. Also note that several types of harmful behaviours often co-occur.

Mental health

A lay definition based on the official one

One of the desired outcomes of effective management of psychosocial risks in workplaces. A positive and resilient state of functioning (in terms of thoughts, emotions and behaviours) which enables a person function effectively in all domains of their life.

Mental illness

A lay definition based on the official one

A condition that impacts on a person's ability to think, feel and behave in a way that has a major negative impact on their overall functioning. It may be diagnosed, undiagnosed, well managed or unmanaged.

Organisational justice

Fairness in how you are treated (in terms of processes, information disclosure and dignity and respect). Poor organisational justice is often associated with harmful behaviours.

Potentially vulnerable workers

Workers who may be more vulnerable to work-related stress from exposure to psychosocial hazards are:

- young workers
- apprentices and trainees
- workers with low power to negotiate their pay and working conditions due to power imbalances (such as 'employee-like' or 'gig' workers)
- workers with existing physical or psychological conditions.

Protective factors

Features of the workforce and workplace that can protect workers from the impact of exposure to psychosocial hazards.

Risk assessors may include any of the following as protective factors in the assessment:

- high control over work volume, complexity and responsibility
- high supervisory support
- high co-worker support
- good quality and quantity of praise and recognition
- procedural justice
- good quality and quantity of consultation with workers in relation to organisational change.

Psychological safety

This is about team dynamics. At work, it's a shared expectation held by members of a team that teammates will not embarrass, reject, or punish them for sharing ideas, taking risks, making mistakes, or soliciting feedback. So, it's an aspect of team culture that can influence safety culture.

Psychosocial

An adjective to describe the interaction of social, cultural, and environmental influences on human thoughts and behaviour.

Psychosocial hazard

A lay definition based on the legal one

Any characteristics of a workplace—including how people behave in it—that have the potential to cause psychological or physical harm. Sometimes referred to as workplace stressors.

Psychosocial health and safety management

The practice of managing psychosocial hazards and risks in workplaces to protect the psychological and physical health and safety of workers and others.

Psychosocial risk

The likelihood of harm to workers that arises from exposure to one or more psychosocial hazards.

Trauma informed care

Low-intensity informal support for people to aid normal recovery from adverse experiences. It's about encouraging a belief in recovery, focusing on people's strengths and giving people the agency to cope in their own preferred ways. It is not about assuming that illness is the most likely outcome.

Trauma

Note, this term is commonly, but incorrectly over-used to describe any negative experience

An umbrella term to describe a potentially traumatic experience and its resulting health impact. It may be direct or indirect (vicarious) exposure to potentially

traumatic events (such as death or serious injury arising from violence, war, accidents, natural disasters) and materials (such as digital images or verbal accounts of death and serious injury). A traumatic health impact is significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's functioning.

Turnover

The proportion of employees who leave an organisation over a set period expressed as a percentage of the total workforce. Influenced by internal 'push' and external 'pull' factors.

Wellbeing

Similar to 'quality of life'. A subjective indication of a person's overall functioning based multiple factors including health, happiness, financial security and employment status. A common measure of a person's functioning as an economic unit of productivity. Note that there is no positive duty under WHS legislation to protect people's 'wellbeing'. The legal obligation only extends to minimising the risk of work-related harm.

Work-related stress

The physiological and psychological response of workers who perceive that their work demands exceed their resources (e.g. skills, time, support) and/or their abilities to cope with the work.