EEO specialists

Creating safe and respectful workplaces

Psychosocial Hazards

What you need to know



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OVERVIEW

Psychosocial hazards are things in your workplace that can lead to psychological and/or physical harm. Some of them relate to how people treat each other and some of them relate to broader areas such as systems, processes and job design.

For all psychosocial hazards, an employer/PCBU must do all that is reasonably practicable to create a safe workplace by -



1. **Identifying** hazards and risks
2. **Assessing** risks
3. **Eliminating** or **minimising** risks through putting in controls
4. **Monitoring/check in** to assess the risks

Psychosocial Hazards[1] are related to the physical, psychological, and social conditions of the workplace which may cause psychological harm.

This includes –

- the way the tasks or jobs are designed, organised, managed and supervised
- tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks
- the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments
- social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interaction.

[1] Code of Practice Psychosocial hazards and Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022 s55A

All states/territories in Australia have a Code of Practice and/or regulations under their safety laws which identifies possible workplace hazards. Each Code outlines the types of psychosocial hazards that could exist in a workplace. We have arranged these into a 'bingo' card format so that you can use this card to start to identify possible psychosocial hazards in your workplace.

Western Australia

1.Poor leadership practices which lead to poor workplace culture	2.Poor or no policies and procedures related to managing behaviours	3.Work demands	4.Low levels of control/autonomy
5.Inadequate support related to constructive feedback, assistance and/or resources	6.Lack of role clarity – unclear or constantly changing	7.Poor organisation change management	8.Low recognition and reward
9.Unfairness/ inconsistency/lack of transparency in the way procedures are implemented/ decisions are made/people are treated	10.Insecure work	11.Adverse environmental conditions: exposure to extreme temperature, noise, poor accommodation	12.Remote work – access to communication/ resources is limited/lengthy travel time
13.Isolated work (including working from home) – limited interaction with others	14.Fatigue – a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion	15.Burnout – a psychological and physical response to chronic work-related stress	16.Inappropriate/ unlawful behaviours
17.Family and domestic violence	18.Traumatic events – exposure to a traumatic event such as death/ serious injury	19.Secondary trauma – unexpected and acute response to another person's trauma	20.Vicarious trauma (ongoing) work exposure to other people's trauma

Code of Practice - Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace

New South Wales

1. Poor leadership practices which lead to poor workplace culture	2. Poor or no policies and procedures related to managing behaviours	3. Work demands	4. Low levels of control/autonomy
5. Inadequate support related to constructive feedback, assistance and/or resources	6. Lack of role clarity – unclear or constantly changing	7. Poor organisation change management/ consultation	8. Low recognition and reward
9. Procedural Justice	10. Conflict or poor workplace relationships	11. Adverse environmental conditions: exposure to extreme temperature, noise, poor accommodation	12. Remote work – access to communication/ resources are limited/lengthy travel time
13. Isolated work (including working from home) – limited interaction with others	14. Inappropriate/ unlawful behaviours	15. Aggression or Violence	16. Traumatic events – exposure to a traumatic event such as death/ serious injury
17. Secondary trauma – unexpected and acute response to another person's trauma	18. Vicarious trauma (ongoing) work exposure to other people's trauma		

Code of Practice - Managing Psychosocial Hazards

Victoria

1. Poor leadership practices which lead to poor workplace culture	2. Gendered Violence	3. Work demands	4. Low levels of control/autonomy
5. Inadequate support related to constructive feedback, assistance and/or resources	6. Lack of role clarity – unclear or constantly changing	7. Poor organisational change management	8. Low recognition and reward
9. Procedural organisational justice/procedural justice	10. Poor workplace relationships	11. Poor environmental conditions	12. Remote work – access to communication/ resources are limited/lengthy travel time
13. Isolated work (including working from home) – limited interaction with others	14. Inappropriate/ unlawful behaviours	15. Aggression or Violence	16. Traumatic events – exposure to a traumatic event such as death/ serious injury
17. Secondary trauma – unexpected and acute response to another person's trauma	18. Vicarious trauma (ongoing) work exposure to other people's trauma	19. Employees in insecure work (at higher risk)	20. Boring/repetitive tasks (low mental stimulation)

Compliance Code Psychological Health

Queensland

1. High and/or low job demands	2. Low job control	3. Poor support	4. Low role clarity
5. Poor organisational change management	6. Low reward and recognition	7. Poor organisational justice	8. Poor workplace relationships including interpersonal conflict
9. Remote or isolated work	10. Poor environmental conditions	11. Traumatic events	12. Violence and aggression
13. Bullying	14. Harassment including sexual harassment		

Code of Practice - Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work



South Australia

1. Job demands	2. Fatigue	3. Low job control	4. Job insecurity
5. Poor support	6. Lack of role clarity	7. Poor organisational change management	8. Inadequate recognition and reward
9. Poor organisational justice	10. Traumatic events or material	11. Remote or isolated work	12. Intrusive surveillance
13. Poor physical environment	14. Violence and aggression	15. Bullying	16. Harassment including sexual harassment
17. Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions			

Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work - Code of Practice



Tasmania

1. Job demands	2. Low job control	3. Poor support	4. Lack of role clarity
5. Poor organisational change management	6. Inadequate reward and recognition	7. Poor organisational justice	8. Traumatic events or material
9. Remote or isolated work	10. Poor physical environment	11. Violence and aggression	12. Bullying
13. Harassment including sexual harassment	14. Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions		

Code of Practice - Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work



Northern Territory

1. Job demands	2. Low job control	3. Poor support	4. Lack of role clarity
5. Poor organisational change management	6. Inadequate reward and recognition	7. Poor organisational justice	8. Conflict or poor workplace relationships, interactions and culture
9. Traumatic events or material	10. Remote or isolated work	11. Poor physical environment	12. Violence and aggression
13. Bullying	14. Harassment including sexual harassment		

Code of Practice - Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work

Australian Capital Territory

1. Job demands	2. Low job control	3. Poor support	4. Lack of role clarity
5. Poor organisational change management	6. Inadequate reward and recognition	7. Poor organisational justice	8. Traumatic events or material
9. Remote or isolated work	10. Poor physical environment	11. Violence and aggression	12. Bullying
13. Harassment including sexual harassment	14. Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions		

Code of Practice - Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work

New Zealand

1.Job demands	2.Low job control	3.Poor support	4.Lack of role clarity
5.Poor organisational change management	6.Inadequate reward and recognition	7.Poor organisational justice	8.Traumatic events or material
9.Remote or isolated work	10.Poor physical environment	11.Violence and aggression	12.Bullying
13.Harassment including sexual harassment	14.Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions		

Managing Psychosocial Risks at Work



LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY & LIABILITY

Workers/managers/PCBU have a range of responsibilities in the workplace related to workplace risks. When a party does not live out these responsibilities this can lead to them being sued and, if found liable, responsible for a range of consequences, including paying compensation, fines/possible imprisonment; this is what liability means.

Worker's Responsibility

All workers have a responsibility to take reasonable care to protect their own safety at work and to "...avoid adversely affecting the health and safety of any other person through any act or omission at work."



Manager's Responsibility

A manager has extra responsibilities within the workplace. When they do not carry out these responsibilities it could lead to a psychosocial risk. It could also result in the manager being liable (legally responsible) and in extreme circumstances being prosecuted. Below is a list of the possible psychosocial hazards that a manager is responsible for -

- Poor leadership practices which create a poor workplace culture.
- Inadequate support related to constructive feedback, assistance, and/or resources.
- Lack of role clarity
- Low recognition and reward
- Unfairness/inconsistency/lack of transparency in the way procedures are implemented/decisions are made/people are treated



Employer's Responsibility

An employer/PCBU has the greatest responsibility to follow the four-step safety process to identify, assess, eliminate/minimise and audit for psychosocial hazards/risks.
An employer is responsible for the big picture analysis, looking at the whole of the organisation, the processes they put in place (or don't), how they run the organisation and how they make changes.

WHERE DO THESE LAWS APPLY

The Code of Practice Psychosocial Hazards has a workplace application. Wherever the worker is, the PCBU/employer has a responsibility to minimise the risk of these risks occurring. Generally, the context is workplace/worktime.

However, where the risk is related to any of the unlawful behaviours identified above these laws also apply anytime there is a workplace connection, such as work social events, conferences, Christmas party etc.

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Psychological safety is different from psychosocial hazards.

Psychosocial hazards refer to workplace factors that can cause psychological harm while psychological safety is the belief that one can speak up without fear of negative consequences.

Psychological safety allows a worker to admit and discuss mistakes, seek feedback and help and share their perspective without fear of being shamed/embarrassed/humiliated/punished.





ABOUT EEO SPECIALISTS

EEO Specialists aim to create safe and respectful workplaces. We do this by delivering professional, interactive and engaging training to help managers and employees to better understand psychosocial hazards, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, and how to manage issues effectively.

Our training content is legally sound and delivered by experienced, knowledgeable, and trained facilitators. We also use corporate theatre as a unique way to engage participants effectively in our in-person workshops.

We have worked successfully with over 100 organisations to train more than 50,700 managers and employees in relation to appropriate workplace behaviours, and compliance with workplace laws. We will be happy to do the same for you.

Wraparound Service

Rather than facilitating training programs in isolation, we offer a Wraparound Service that includes understanding the circumstances of your organisation, developing a customised plan, facilitating legally sound training, and providing ongoing support via resources in the EEO Compliance Hub.



If you would like to have a confidential discussion about workplace behaviour training and compliance, please call Alysha Hooper on 0433 376 541 or email alysha@equalopportunitytraining.com.au


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