

FACT SHEET

Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace



What are Psychosocial Hazards?

Psychosocial hazards refer to aspects of work design, organisation, or management that pose a risk of psychological or physical harm. These are not merely personal stressors, but workplace conditions that can cause long-term harm if not addressed.



Why It Matters?

In Queensland, the annual cost of work-related mental health conditions to employers is estimated to be \$11 Billion.

This includes:

- Absenteeism
- Low productivity
- Workers' compensation claims

Reducing psychosocial hazards creates a healthier, safer, and more productive workplace. It also fulfils your legal obligations.

As a business owner, you must ensure that workers and other persons are not exposed to risks to their psychological or physical health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable. Where risks cannot be eliminated entirely, they must be minimised as much as possible.



(Visit this link for a quick summary of the *Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work*: <https://youtu.be/JipRLrrQC1k>.)



Common Psychosocial Hazards

Psychosocial hazards can lead to both psychological and physical harm, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, fatigue, and musculoskeletal injuries. These risks arise from various work conditions and interactions.

Examples of common psychosocial hazards include:

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| • Bullying | • Intrusive surveillance |
| • Harassment, including sexual harassment | • Lack of role clarity |
| • Job demands | • Low job control |
| • Poor physical environment | • Job insecurity |
| | • Poor support |

- Poor organizational change management
- Traumatic events and material
- Remote or isolated work
- Fatigue
- Violence and aggression
- Poor organisational justice
- Conflict or poor relationships/interactions
- Inadequate reward and recognition

Managing Psychosocial Risk



1. Identify Hazards

Find out what would cause harm:

- Consult workers directly
- Use surveys or assessment tools
- Observe work practices
- Review documents and incident data

2. Assess Risks

Evaluate the likelihood and impact.

- Duration: How long is the worker exposed?
- Frequency: How often does exposure occur?
- Severity: How serious is the potential harm?



3. Control Risks

Use the most effective controls that are reasonably practicable:

- Adjust workloads and expectations
- Improve support, training, communication, and policies
- Introduce engineering or administrative



4. Review Control Measures

Regularly review if control measures are working:

- After incidents, complaints or workplace changes
- When consultation indicates a problem
- When new risks emerge
- When requested by a Health and Safety Representative (HSR)



How Psychosocial Risks Affect Worker

SITUATION	UNINTENDED MESSAGE	IMPACT
<i>Unrealistic deadlines and overwork</i>	Your well-being isn't valued	Burnout, stress, absenteeism
<i>Lack of clarity in job roles</i>	You're expected to figure it out alone	Confusion, frustration, low performance
<i>Exclusion from meetings and discussions</i>	Your input doesn't matter	Low morale, disengagement
<i>No support or feedback from managers</i>	You're on your own	Anxiety, lack of confidence
<i>Persistent interpersonal conflict</i>	It's just part of the job	Hostile environment, staff turnover

Responsibilities of Managers and Leaders



- Encourage open communication and psychological safety
- Recognise and respond early to psychosocial risks —don't wait for formal complaints
- Conduct regular risk assessments and implement preventive actions
- Address interpersonal issues with empathy and consistency
- Provide timely, constructive feedback and ongoing support
- Communicate workplace changes clearly and supportively
- Model respectful behaviour and foster a culture of inclusion and accountability

Key Takeaways

- Psychosocial hazards can have serious effects on mental and physical health
- Supportive leadership can prevent harm
- Respectful and inclusive workplaces benefit everyone
- Coaching and early intervention are powerful tools for change