

Stress and Fatigue Management

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Supporting documentation and proforma letters can be found in Tool Packs No.1 and 2.

This will be indicated in the text by the following: (TP1) or (TP2).

All information contained in this guide is current at time of release.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world with technological advancements, communication and a global business environment, there is increased pressure on people in general and especially on those trying to manage their personal and business lives to maintain a balance and stay on top of what can be very difficult and trying circumstances.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate 45 per cent of Australians between the ages of 16 and 85 will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.

According to Reventure Australia's research, more than half of all Australian workers agree increasing change and complexity at work are leading to job dissatisfaction and more frequent high levels of stress at work.

In the business environment there is a requirement under Work Health and Safety Legislation that employers must assess and manage the risk of any psychological stress in the workplace. This may include issues such as bullying and harassment, excessive workloads, or physical stressors such as noise or location of work.

Progressive organisations have found that it is no longer effective to view employees as merely business assets or human resources but recognises that they are whole people with lives and relationships outside of work and that they require support and assistance on occasion to reach their full potential and be the best possible employee.

Discrimination in the workplace against someone with a mental illness (or other disability) is unlawful in Australia under the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** (DDA). All employers have a duty to be aware of how their conduct should be guided by the DDA, as well as any relevant State or Territory legislation.

One of the most effective and least used methods for providing this type of assistance is through stress management and stress reduction strategies which, while they may be introduced at the workplace, can have a holistic beneficial outcome for participants.

What is Stress?

Stress is both a physiological and psychological response to an event. Each of us experiences stress differently, depending on our perceptions and the coping strategies we bring to the experience, for example when we perceive an event as threatening and don't think we will be able to cope with that threat. The key words here are 'perceive' and 'think' indicating that stress is a phenomenon that starts in the mind. We then react or respond in accordance with our understanding of our ability to cope with and manage the event.

Stress affects both the mind and the body. Stress may affect you positively or negatively depending upon your perception of a situation. You can avoid some stressors but not others. Avoid the stressors you can, and learn to cope with the others. In order to cope, learn and practice stress management skills and establish stress management habits. Effective stress management will balance your daily life.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

- Pain or tension in neck or shoulders
- Chronic anger, hostility, or frustration
- Fatigue
- Nightmares or sleep disturbances
- Recurrent headaches
- Chest pain or heartburn
- Low or lack of motivation
- Irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Change in eating habits
- Thinking troubled thoughts constantly
- Isolation
- Increased smoking or alcohol consumption

If you are experiencing the signs and symptoms above, seek a medical evaluation from your health care provider to exclude other medical concerns.

When we perceive that we are unable to cope, we often experience a heightened physiological response which in, turn affects the emotions, the body, and even the spirit.

- The greatest weapon against **stress** is our ability to choose one thought over another
- It is not **stress** that kills us, it is our reaction to it

A basic model for viewing stress and stress management is as follows:



This model implies an interaction between the stressor (the stressful event) and our beliefs (whatever beliefs, emotional responses, and coping strategies we have available to us at the time) which affects how we think. When this thinking is negative, we call it 'stinkin' thinking', since these thoughts tend to come automatically at a below conscious level and are often negative and distorted. These thoughts affect our emotions, which in turn, affect both our body and how we behave.

For example, think about being audited by the tax department. If you think about the kind of thoughts or fears your mind conjures up when you think about having your taxes reviewed by the government, do you feel angry or scared? Is your stomach tied in knots? Are your muscles tense? Are you ready to jump into action? What beliefs do you hold about the tax department that fuel your thoughts, feelings, and physical reactions?

Experts estimate that on average we experience about forty to fifty stress responses per day.

However, we are so used to experiencing stress responses that we consciously ignore almost all of them. It is only when our body starts demanding our attention (e.g. tension headache, bruxism, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, etc.) that we usually start to pay attention to stress. Major stressors (things like the death of a loved one) occur less often, however we frequently experience what are called 'daily hassles', the accumulation of which can lead to stimulus overload e.g. the phone rings, a colleague is waiting at the door, your children need you and you have a major event in need of urgent attention, all of which occur at the same time.

Research shows that too much stress and the accumulation of stress affects both our physical and psychological health.

Causes of Stress

Listing the causes of stress is not easy. There can be innumerable contributing factors since different individuals react differently to the same stress conditions. Extreme stress situations for an individual may prove to be mild for one person, yet for another the situations might not qualify as stress symptoms at all. A stress condition can be real or perceived, however our brain will react the same way to both causes of stress by releasing stress hormones equal to the degree of stress felt. The brain does not differentiate between real and imagined stress. For this reason, it is better to think of the causes as triggers that signal the brain that you are not feeling up to the task.

Daily Hassles

Daily hassles are the little hassles or annoyances that occur practically every day, such as having to make decisions, arguing with friends and family, trying to meet deadlines at school or work or stepping on a piece of garbage someone has carelessly dropped.

Although a wide variety of daily hassles can be sources of stress, they often involve conflicts between behaviours or things people may or may not want to do.

- If someone is experiencing an *approach-approach conflict*, that person has to choose between two attractive alternatives, such as going on vacation or buying a new computer
- If someone is experiencing an *avoidance-avoidance conflict*, that person has to choose between two unattractive alternatives, such as having a pet 'put to sleep' or spending the money on an expensive surgical procedure for it
- If someone is experiencing an *approach-avoidance conflict*, that person has to choose whether to engage in an activity that has both attractive and unattractive qualities, such as mowing the lawn, an activity that would result in a nice lawn but would not be enjoyable to do

In particular, daily hassles that involve interpersonal conflicts seem to have an impact that lasts longer than most other daily hassles.

Additionally, according to a recent survey of middle-aged adults the top ten daily hassles are as follows:

1. Concerns about weight
2. Health of a family member
3. Rising prices of common goods
4. Home maintenance
5. Too many things to do
6. Misplacing or losing things
7. Backyard work or outside home maintenance
8. Property, investments, or taxes
9. Crime
10. Physical appearance

Recognising Stress

While a certain level of stress is necessary to avoid boredom, high levels of stress over a sustained period can damage your health. In the absence of the ability to run away or to physically attack (Fight or Flight), the individual often responds in one or a number of the following ways.

Body's Reaction to Stress	Responding to Stress		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adrenaline increases ▪ Heart rate increases ▪ Blood pressure rises ▪ Pupils dilate ▪ Hands get cold and clammy ▪ Perspiration ▪ You become numb to pain ▪ You get goose bumps on the skin 	Physical	Emotions	Behaviour
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Headaches ▪ Back pain ▪ Tired ▪ Upset Stomach / ulcers ▪ Digestive disorders ▪ Muscle tension ▪ Sexual dysfunction ▪ Sweating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anxiety ▪ Depression ▪ Sadness ▪ Anger ▪ Impatience ▪ Irritability ▪ Feeling of helplessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eat poorly ▪ Excessive smoking ▪ Abuse drugs or alcohol ▪ Drive or act recklessly ▪ Become accident prone ▪ Communicate poorly ▪ Become extremely angry
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Back pain ▪ Irregular heart rate ▪ Frequent colds ▪ Skin problems ▪ Insomnia ▪ Fatigue 	Thinking	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor concentration ▪ Forgetfulness ▪ Learning difficulties ▪ Speech problems ▪ Obsessive negative thoughts 	

Many of the physiological and emotional changes listed in the table are linked. For example, those in a state of anxiety will have a rise in heart rate and those suffering from tension and depression may have bouts of insomnia.

While the symptoms in isolation may or may not show stress, where several occur it is likely that stress is having an effect.

Stress at work can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.

However, not all stress is a bad thing; a moderate amount of stress may improve your ability to perform tasks.

There are two main types of stress which people experience and these are defined below:

- **Eustress** - The stress that facilitates your efforts (good stress)
- **Distress** - The stress that has a negative impact on your ability to function or cope with certain situations

Distress is the stress type that many employees will associate with their roles. This job stress if not managed effectively can often lead to poor health and even injury.

In the working environment as well as society in general there are a range of personal views about workplace stress which show that the symptoms or an exclamation of stress will not always have acceptance. Some of the common views on stress are:

- Talking about stress will increase the problem and encourage sickness absence
- Turning over stones will reveal too much trouble
- People will say they are stressed when they are not and use it as an excuse for going off sick
- There is no such thing as stress
- Only wimps suffer from stress and we are better off without them
- There is nothing we can do about it
- It is not a serious problem
- We should just send them for counselling

The reality is that stress means very different things to different people. Some people rarely experience high levels of stress in their lives, while others experience it regularly and some are more able to cope with stress levels than others. The difficulty with stress is that there are no clear definitions for what the impact can be, as each person experiences it differently.

Tackling stress within the workplace brings benefits that can be greatly advantageous to both the business and the employee personally. This can include:

- Improved employee commitment to work
- Improved staff performance and productivity
- Reduced staff turnover and intention to leave
- Improved attendance levels
- Improved staff retention and recruitment
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Improved organisational image and reputation
- Reduced workplace grievances and incidents which can reduce the likelihood of potential litigation

The moral/ethical case for stress management

- Tackling stress prevents ill health
- Stress reduction strategies can positively improve physical effects such as heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, or various minor illnesses
- Prevents psychological effects such as anxiety depression

- Prevents the use and abuse of alcohol other drugs
- Prevents difficulty sleeping and increases general functionality

The legal case

Although the concept of 'being stressed' may have different meanings, there are a number of well documented and significantly costly ways that high levels of stress can impact negatively on an organisation. The law requires employers to tackle stress through Work Health and Safety obligations, grievance, and dispute handling, bullying and harassment, industrial matters, and general workplace conditions where an overload or high levels of distress can lead to:

- Increased absenteeism and subsequent sick leave costs
- Reduced capability
- Reduced output
- Increased load on other staff
- Risk associated with worker's compensation claims for stress related injuries/sickness
- Increased worker's compensation premiums
- Industrial relations/union claims
- Harassment/bullying claims
- Increased employee turnover resulting in increased recruitment costs and training costs
- Loss of business/clients
- Bad reputation in the industry (impact on attracting new skilled staff)
- Poor communication
- Inability to introduce change
- Inability to increase workload to meet new challenges
- 'Car park culture' leading to resentment in the workforce
- Role ambiguity
- Damaged personal relationships which can lead to excessive drinking/drug abuse and reduced work performance
- Poor organisational climate
- Increased conflict

Stress Prevention and Management

Stress Management - What is Stress?

Stress is the wear and tear on your body as you adjust to a continually changing environment. There are both physical and emotional effects of stress that can create positive or negative feelings. Negative effects of stress can include feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which can lead to health problems like headache, upset stomach, rash, insomnia, ulcer, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. However not all stress is negative. Stress can help compel you to action. It can result in new awareness or exciting new perspectives. You experience stress as you readjust the course of your life when major events such as the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a job promotion, or a new relationship occur. As you adapt to different circumstances stress will help or hinder you depending on how you react to it.

Eliminating Stress

Positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and everyone thrives under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, frustrations, and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Learn how to manage stress and how to use it to help you. Insufficient stress may lead to depression that makes you feel bored and dejected. On the other hand, excessive stress may leave you feeling tied up in knots. The key is finding your optimal stress level that will motivate but not overwhelm you.

Optimal Stress

Each individual's optimal stress level is different. What distresses someone may energise someone else. The amount of stress you can tolerate before becoming distressed changes with age. Research shows that most illness relates to unrelieved stress. If you experience symptoms of stress, your level of stress is beyond optimal. You need to reduce the stress in your life and improve your ability to manage it.

Symptoms of Stress

- Muscle tension in the neck, shoulders or back. Tension in these areas may cause muscle cramps, headache, or backache.
- Insomnia, or trouble falling or staying asleep. The muscle tension, increased heart and breathing rates stress causes can exacerbate insomnia.
- Fatigue (unless physical exertion causes the fatigue)
- Boredom, depression, or listlessness. If you are in any of these states constantly you are under stress, which saps your energy.
- Drinking too much alcohol in order to escape problems.

- Eating too much or too little. Compulsive eating can strain the heart, kidneys, and arteries, and can cause self-disgust, a major stressor. Eating too little can signify withdrawal and depression.
- Diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, gas, or constipation. Spoiled food or viral infection can cause digestive distress, but persistent trouble can indicate stress.
- Palpitations or skipping heart. When you are stressed, your heartbeat increases, causing you to feel palpitations.
- Phobias. Irrational fears, such as fears of enclosed places or heights could signify hidden emotional conflicts that cause stress.
- Tics, restlessness or itching.
- Worry about the symptoms of stress. Any symptom that is unusual for you can indicate stress.

There are many causes of job stress in a workplace which can make it difficult to design an effective holistic program where you can monitor tangible results. The most effective management strategies to deal with these factors are divided into two key areas - organisational and individual.

The organisational context relates to the impact the business may have on stress levels within the workplace. Key areas of focus within an organisation should include:

Effective management structure and leadership

- Clear chains of command and reporting relationships
- Stress orientation provided for all workers
- Shifts no longer than twelve hours with twelve hours off
- Necessary supplies available to perform their roles (e.g., paper, forms, pens, educational materials, IT equipment and training)
- The available communication tools (e.g., mobiles, radios, GPS, email)
- Trained supervisors and managers with demonstrated early intervention skills
- A clear and functional organisational structure
- Stress prevention program direction and accomplishments reviewed and modified as needed

The definition and implementation of clear purpose and goals across an organisation assists in providing direction and support with the following steps:

- Clearly defined intervention goals and strategies which are appropriate to organisational contexts
- Organisational and customer needs, focus and scope of programs are defined
- Periodic assessment of organisational health and service targets/strategies
- Early intervention guidance guidelines are integrated into service priorities

- Staff trained and supervised to define limits and make referrals
- Feedback provided to staff on program accomplishments, numbers of contacts etc.

Functionally defined roles

- Staff are inducted and trained with written role descriptions for each assignment
- Job descriptions and expectations for all positions are agreed upon
- Participating stakeholders' roles are understood and working relationships with key agency contacts are maintained

Team support

- Buddy system is implemented for support and monitoring stress reactions
- There is a positive atmosphere of support and tolerance with encouragement such as 'good job' said often
- The team approach that avoids isolating workers from their peers and interactions with other parts of the organisation
- There is informal case consultation, problem solving and resource sharing
- There are regular, effective meetings with productive personal sharing and creative solution development
- Referrals are made to clinical consultation and supervision where appropriate (Employee Assistance Program)
- In-service training appropriate to stress management is conducted

The individual context relates to what we can do as people to help manage the negative impact of high stress levels in our lives. The mistake that is often made by employers is to treat employees as a one-dimensional worker who is only there to work and perform the duties that they are paid for. The reality is that every person who attends work has accumulated responsibilities, fears and failures along the way and each day that they come to work any, or all of the following issues may be prevalent in their minds:

- Family issues such as parental or spousal care
- Childcare issues
- Financial issues
- Relationship issues
- Health issues
- Job security issues

Then there are other issues such as:

- Alcohol and other drug use and misuse
- Criminal activities
- Driving offences
- Personal problems and accidents

When you consider that employees have to manage their personal lives well and maintain some form of balance in order to work on a daily basis then it becomes more apparent that employers should look at the whole person and not just the worker.

The following techniques can reduce risk and improve outputs:

- Rotating workers between low, mid, and high stress tasks
- Encouraging breaks and time away from high stress tasks
- Educating about signs and symptoms of worker stress and coping strategies
- Providing individual and group defusing and debriefing where incidents occur
- Creating a rehabilitation plan for workers who experience overload; debriefing, re-entry information, opportunity to critique and formal recognition for service
- Educating about long-term stresses of overload and the importance of ongoing stress management
- Creating an early intervention stress management checklist including organisational and individual approaches and implementation plans
- Plan for regular stress interventions at work and in meetings

Improving Stress Management

Even if you are aware you have unrelieved stress you have not reduced its harmful effects. There are as many sources of stress as there are possibilities for coping with it. However, managing stress requires the willingness to change the source of your stress or your reaction to it. Below are suggestions for stress management techniques.

Become aware of your stressors and your reactions to them.

- Don't ignore your distress.
- Determine events that distress you. What are you telling yourself about meaning of these events?
- Determine how your body responds to stress. For example, do you become nervous or physically upset?
- Identify what you can change.

- Can you change your stressors by avoiding or eliminating them?
- Can you reduce their intensity?
- Can you shorten your exposure to stress by taking a break?
- Can you devote the time and energy necessary to making a change? Goal setting, time management techniques, and delayed gratification strategies may help.

Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress.

- Do you view stressors in exaggerated terms?
- Do you expect to please everyone?
- Are you overreacting? Do you feel you must always prevail in every situation?
- Work at adopting more moderate views. Try to see stress as something you can cope with rather than something that overpowers you.
- Try to temper your emotions. Put the situation in perspective. Do not labour on the negative aspects and the what if's.

Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress.

- Concentrate on slow deep breathing to bring your heart rate back to normal.
- Relaxation techniques can reduce muscle tension. Electronic biofeedback can help you gain voluntary control over muscle tension, heart rate, and blood pressure.
- Medications, when prescribed by a physician, can help in the short term in moderating your physical reactions. However, medication alone is not the answer.
- Learning to moderate these reactions on your own is a preferable long-term solution.

Build your physical reserves.

- Exercise for cardiovascular fitness three to four times a week (moderate, prolonged rhythmic exercise is best, such as walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging).
- Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals.
- Maintain your ideal weight.
- Avoid nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants.
- Mix leisure with work. Take breaks and get away when you can.
- Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible.

Maintain your emotional reserves.

- Develop some mutually supportive friendships/relationships.
- Pursue realistic meaningful goals, rather than goals others have for you.
- Expect some frustrations, failures, and sorrows.
- Always be kind and gentle with yourself. Be your own friend.

Stress Policy

("the Company") is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Objective

To identify and reduce risks in relation to stress and to manage the negative impact of stress.

Policy

("the Company") will:

- Identify sources of workplace stressors
- Determine risks by describing the circumstances and exposure to risk and the potential effects
- Control risks by implementing risk controls to eliminate or reduce risks in relation to stress
- Consult with industry stakeholders, State Authorities, Health and Safety Representatives and employees in relation to stress risk controls
- Promote recognised stress management techniques
- Provide awareness raising and training for appropriate management of employees
- Establish reporting, issue, and conflict resolution guidelines
- Recognise and support employees who may be experiencing work related stress
- Ensure injured employees receive treatment and assistance they require to return to work
- Reviewing systems work and risk control measures regularly, and in the event of an injury report in relation to stress.

Fatigue and Overwork

Today's work environments are often very demanding. Technology and change have led to tasks involving greater mental functioning and innovation and fewer manual and repetitive tasks.

Work often requires greater flexibility and longer hours. The modern worker caught in an ever-changing world of work is required to respond to consistently changing goals and deadlines.

Where you find yourself under excessive levels of stress over a short period, you may find that your performance deteriorates, however afterwards you will be able to treat the event as a learning experience and you can adopt stress management strategies to avoid the problem in the future.

Contrary to short term stress, the effects of long-term stress can go unnoticed and accumulate to a detrimental extent, especially for those who have high levels of responsibility. These people usually find themselves conditioned to manage stress and often do not notice the triggers. In this case the stress can have an accumulative effect reaching dangerous levels.

Consistent exposure to greater demands has seen an increase in stress related syndromes such as:

- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Burn out
- Breakdown
- Depression

Fatigue and exhaustion

Over time, physical and emotional resources are depleted by the sustained heightened state of arousal that stress produces. You may experience fatigue, lethargy and eventually exhaustion may lead to disengagement from the stressors, your family, colleagues, and friends.

Burn-out

Burn-out occurs where highly committed people lose their interest and motivation. Typically, it will occur in hard working, driven people who become emotionally, psychologically, or physically exhausted.

You are at risk of a burnout when:

- You find it difficult to say 'no' to additional commitments or responsibilities
- You have been under intense and sustained pressure for some time
- Your high standards make it difficult to delegate to assistants
- You have been trying to achieve too much for too long
- You have been giving too much emotional support for too long

There are a number of strategies which can help us overcome or manage the negative impacts of stress in our lives. These include:

Management of workload

- Setting task priority levels with a realistic work plan
- Planning, effective time management and avoidance of work overload (e.g. work smarter, not harder)
- Periodically reviewing early intervention stress management goals and activities to meet them
- Periodically reviewing the feasibility of scope of works with human resources available

Balanced lifestyle

While it would be a perfect world if we all ate responsibly, avoided alcohol and other drugs, exercised daily and maintained a fully healthy and balanced lifestyle, the reality is that the world is

a harsh place and survival on a daily basis is different for every individual on the planet. However, most people aspire to some form of balanced lifestyle which is usually the management of:

- Leisure
- Home
- Career

There are a number of steps that can be taken to decrease stress and to improve one's overall health and wellbeing through:

- Physical exercise and muscle stretching when possible
- Nutritional eating, avoiding excessive junk food, caffeine, alcohol, or tobacco
- Avoiding the abuse of prescription drugs
- Avoiding the use of so-called recreational drugs that can cause anxiety and depression
- Adequate sleep and rest, especially on longer assignments
- Contact and connection maintained with primary social supports
- Family and social connections maintained away from the work environment
- Exercise, recreational activities, hobbies, or spiritual pursuits maintained (or begun)
- Overinvestment in work is discouraged

The Japanese even have a word for death by overwork, they call it 'Karoshi'.

There are many studies on relaxation and stress reduction in the workplace which have proven that there are demonstrable benefits in introducing some form of relaxation strategies which employees can participate in.

One major oil company introduced a worldwide incentive plan available for all employees who smoked cigarettes which required them to sign a contract that they would stop smoking and not recommence for a period of 12 months after the term of the contract. Those employees who took part were paid a \$1,000 cash incentive to quit.

This is a perfect example of a major employer attempting to improve the general health and wellbeing of their staff while at the same time reducing absenteeism and health related problems which impacted on their internally managed health benefits scheme.

Some other employer initiatives for workplace stress reduction strategies include:

- The provision or subsidy of childcare facilities
- Workplace gyms

- Organising team-based events in walks, fun runs and marathons with company prizes or charity incentives
- Massage providers visiting at lunchtimes
- Meditation rooms
- Games rooms

Flexible work arrangements

Variations to the modern awards effective from December 2018 include rules about requests for flexible work arrangements. These changes allow employers and employees the ability to work out ways to accommodate particular work and personal circumstances so that the best possible outcome is achieved by both parties.

The items that may be discussed between the employer and employees are:

- hours of work (e.g. changes to start and finish times)
- patterns of work (e.g. split shifts or job sharing)
- locations of work (e.g. working from home)

Before responding to a request from an eligible employee, an employer must first discuss the request with the employee to try to reach an agreement about a change to their working arrangements.

Requests can only be refused on reasonable business grounds. If employers refuse a request, they need to provide the employee with a written response.

Quite often personal matters, changes in relationships and financial issues arise which increase the stress levels of employees and can adversely affect their output and relationships with clients and other workers.

Often a temporary change in working hours or patterns of work may alleviate the stress caused by the change to benefit of all parties.

Fatigue Management Procedure

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the effective, systematic, and consistent management of all risks associated with employee/worker fatigue and the continuous improvement of our Fatigue Risk Management Framework.

Scope

This procedure applies to any worker with control over or that might influence the fatigue of an employee or worker within ("the Company") including but not limited to the roles listed below).

Procedure detail

Overview of fatigue management

The purpose of fatigue management is to identify and assess potential fatigue-related risks before they occur so that risk treatment measures can be implemented which either eliminate the risk entirely (where practicable), or reduce the likelihood that the risk will occur or reduce the potential adverse consequences of the risk.

Fatigue Risk Management Framework

("the Company") Fatigue Risk Management Framework incorporates the relevant Fatigue Management Strategy that we operate under (i.e. Standard Hours, Basic Fatigue Management or Advanced Fatigue Management) and contains the same set of stages included in the Risk Management Procedure. Refer to the Risk Management Procedure for further guidance on each of the following stages

Establish the context

This stage defines the basic parameters for fatigue risk management and sets the scope for the rest of the risk management process. The context is established as part of our general Risk Management Framework and is then applied throughout the organisation.

Identify risks

This stage can either take place at initialisation or during maintenance.

During initialisation, this stage identifies the individual risks to be managed in our workplace by systematically identifying what can happen, when, where, how, why and to who. The aim is to generate a comprehensive list of fatigue-related risks which will be added to the Risk Register.

During maintenance, this stage works in conjunction with the Monitor and Review stage to identify whether:

- implemented control measures result in new risks
- reported hazards, near-misses or incidents highlight new risks
- new activities, processes, equipment etc. result in new risks

This stage will incorporate recommendations from the:

- Hazard Observation Form (where a hazard has been observed)
- Incident Report Form (where an incident has been reported)
- Other Risk Management Framework processes (e.g. review of policies, procedures, and data)
- Industry bodies, specialists, and representatives

This stage will focus on those tasks and roles that have a potential impact on employee fatigue, such as consignors, consignees, schedulers, drivers, loaders, packers, Senior and department managers, and the employee/worker themselves.

Fatigue-related risks can be divided into two categories representing shared responsibility:

1. work-related risks (responsibility of the organisation)
2. non work-related risks (responsibility of the worker)

Common fatigue-related risks include:

Work-related risks	Non work-related risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedulers over-scheduling an employee/worker for a shift that exceeds the allowable work time based on the work and rest hours option they operate under• Schedulers allocating timeslots that cannot be met without an employee/worker skipping a rest break• Schedulers scheduling employees/workers to work combinations of day shifts and night shifts• Schedulers not rostering sufficient rest periods between shifts• Loaders experiencing delays in vehicle loading which impact the employee/workers' work time• Consignors demanding unachievable delivery times• Company not providing appropriate facilities to enable employees/workers to rest• Company payment schemes that incentivise employee/workers to skip rest breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees/workers not being able to recognise and act on their fatigue warning signs• Employees/workers starting a shift already fatigued from factors in their personal life such as a new baby or excessive social activities• Employees/workers repeatedly not getting enough good quality sleep between shifts leading to accumulated sleep debt• Employees/workers with poor health habits such as excessive smoking, drinking, and use of caffeine• Employees/workers with un-diagnosed or un-reported medical conditions that cause fatigue such as insomnia

Fatigue-related risks can be identified in a range of ways, such as:

- making informed opinions based on experience and industry trends
- consulting with employee/workers, schedulers, and other appropriate workers
- inspecting rosters and schedules
- analysing hazard observations, incident and near-miss reports and other documentation
- observing scheduling, loading and driving-preparation activities
- auditing the Fatigue Risk Management Framework annually

Assess risks

This stage involves analysing and then evaluating the identified fatigue-related risks. Analysing involves considering the sources of fatigue-related risk and combining their potential consequences and the likelihood that they will occur in order to allocate their risk level. It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of existing controls that have already been implemented from previous risk management activities.

Analysing the likelihood and consequence of fatigue-related risks can be difficult because individuals respond differently to factors that may contribute to fatigue. For example, a factor that causes one person to feel fatigued may have little impact on another person. There are some factors that are likely to contribute to fatigue in a majority of individuals because they disrupt normal body rhythms or prevent adequate rest and recovery. These include the:

- total length of the shift
- total number of hours worked during the shift
- type of work performed
- time of day when work is performed
- length of rest break during the shift
- length of rest break between shifts
- number and regularity of night shifts
- number and regularity of on-call shifts

Evaluating is about using the outcomes of the risk analysis to decide which of the fatigue-related risks need risk treatment measures and their priority for implementation.

When assessing the risk of fatigue, it is important to remember that fatigue is cumulative. A risk that has a low or moderate risk level but is ongoing, can lead to severe consequences if not treated.

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost certain	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
Possible	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Rare	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High

Treat risks

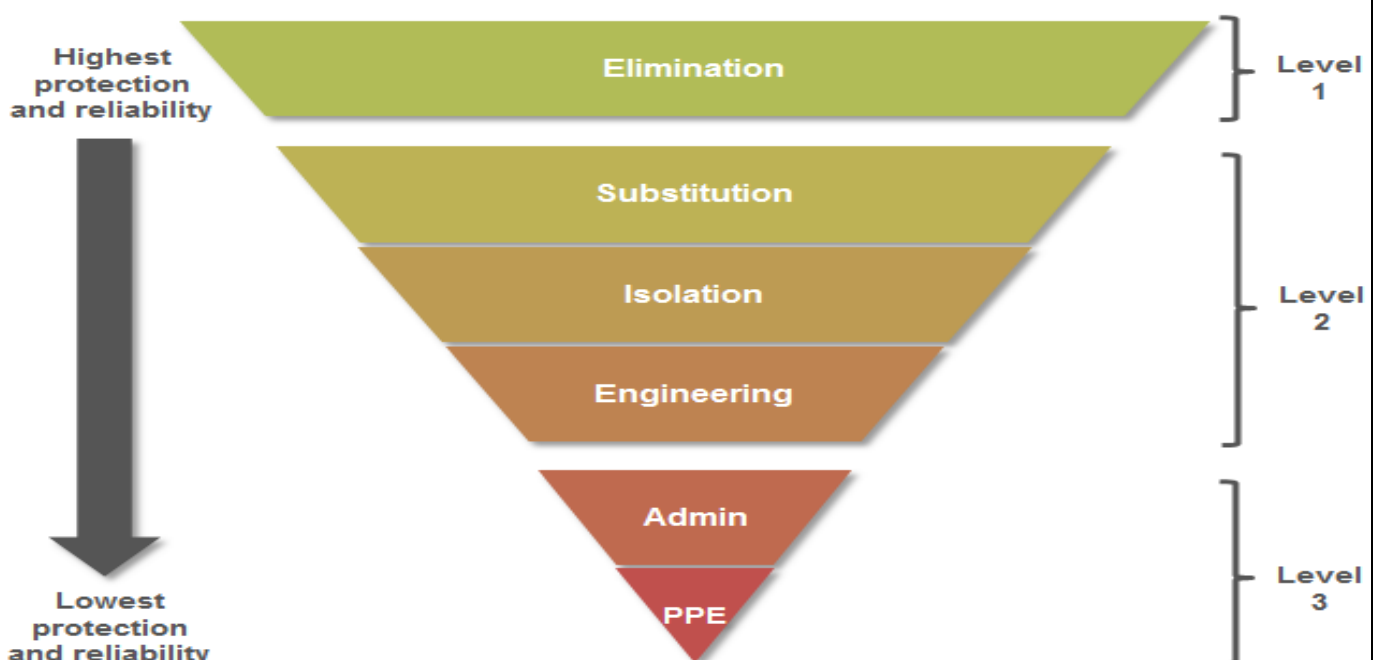
This stage involves identifying, assessing, selecting, documenting, and implementing the risk treatment options that will eliminate the fatigue-related risks that will not be tolerated or minimise them if elimination is not reasonably practicable.

Risk treatment options

Eliminate the risk	By removing the risk altogether (uses Elimination from the Hierarchy of Controls below)
If you cannot eliminate the risk, then consider:	
Reduce or control the risk consequences	By implementing one or a combination of control measures from Substitution, Isolation, Engineering, Administration and PPE from the Hierarchy of Controls below
Reduce or control the risk likelihood	By implementing one or a combination of control measures from Substitution, Isolation, Engineering, Administration and PPE from the Hierarchy of Controls below
Share the risk	By sharing or transferring ownership and liability for the risk to another party (e.g. partnership/joint venture or insurance)
Tolerate the risk	By making an informed decision to accept the risk at its current risk level

The Hierarchy of Controls is used to rank each treatment option (risk control) from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. You must always aim to eliminate a hazard, which is the most effective control. If this is not reasonably practicable, you must minimise the risk by working through the other alternatives in the hierarchy.

Hierarchy of Controls



Level 1: Always aim to eliminate the risk	
Elimination	Involves removing the risk altogether, for example, enforce and monitor employees/workers to eliminate the potential to exceed the legal work hour requirements
Level 2: If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the hazards and associated risks, you should minimise the risks using one or more of the following approaches	
Substitution	Involves substituting the hazard with a hazard that has a lower risk, for example, alter rostered hours to reduce the number and duration of night shifts
Isolation	Involves separating the hazard from the person at risk, for example, providing employees/workers with rest facilities away from noise and distraction
Engineering	Involves applying mechanical devices or processes, for example, re-engineering the process for loading and unloading to reduce wait times for drivers
Level 3: Should only be used as a last resort, an interim measure or to support a higher-level control measure	
Administration	Involves minimising the risk by administrative means, such as procedures and training, for example, providing training in safe scheduling procedures to schedulers. It is not recommended to use this control on its own as it relies on human behaviour and supervision.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Involves using PPE, for example, ensuring vehicle seatbelts and airbags are maintained and in good condition. While this option can provide added protection, it is considered the least effective control method.

Common fatigue-related risk treatment options (controls) include:

- **scheduling:**
 - implement rosters and schedules that meet all legal work and rest hour requirements
 - use predictable rosters (where possible) that limit the number of night shifts and provide appropriate rest breaks during and between shifts

- restrict shift work, especially night shifts, to essential tasks and projects
- avoid high-risk, complex tasks during fatigue risk periods (e.g. 2am-6am)
- assess new rosters or alterations to existing rosters to identify any fatigue-related risks prior to implementation
- reduce the need for workers to be on-call
- consider the impact of work-related phone calls that disrupt a worker's sleep while not at work
- **monitoring and supervision:**
 - provide suitable supervision during shift work (especially high-risk tasks)
 - monitor workers for signs of fatigue
 - conduct random fatigue assessments of workers
 - monitor rosters, schedules, and trip plans for risks
- **contingency plans:**
 - provide a process for fatigued workers to stop work and report to their supervisor (without penalty) rather than continuing working and risking a fatigue-related incident
 - provide a process to manage a fatigued worker (e.g. re-allocate to suitable alternate duties or send home to gain suitable rest)
- **policies, procedures, and tools that:**
 - communicate the roles, responsibilities, and requirements of the Fatigue Risk Management Framework
 - enable those roles with control or influence over employee/worker fatigue to eliminate or minimise fatigue-related risks (e.g., Safe Driving Plans, Employee/worker Fitness for Duty Checklist and Declaration, Scheduler Checklist)
- **information and training on:**
 - roles, responsibilities, and requirements of the Fatigue Risk Management Framework
 - legal work and rest hour requirements and other requirements under the legislation
 - identifying the signs of fatigue in yourself and others
 - managing work and non-work-related fatigue
- **counselling, support, and treatment:**

- provide a confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through an external service provider that is available to all workers and their families (places emphasis on the recognition and management of fatigue)
- provide treatment and/or support for workers who experience fatigue-related issues
- **consignor/consignee:**
 - inform consignors/consignees of the effect of unreasonable scheduling demands
 - obtain consignor/consignee commitment to safe scheduling practices

All risks, risk treatment options (controls), implementation plans, responsible persons and due dates must be recorded in our Risk Register and implemented into any relevant documentation such as Safe Work Procedures.

Monitor and review

This stage involves the ongoing monitoring and review of the fatigue-related risks and their controls.

The monitoring and review process can take place on a:

- day-to-day basis as part of daily operations
- ad-hoc basis, for example, after an incident has been reported
- scheduled basis as part of annual audit processes

This stage checks that the controls:

- have been implemented
- continue to be effective in eliminating or minimising the risks
- do not result in new risks

If non-conformances or new risks are identified, then the risk management process will need to be repeated to make further decisions about risk treatment.

("the Company") Risk Register will specify who is responsible for implementing the risk controls and by which date. It will also set out the date of the next review of the risk and controls.

Communicate and consult

It is important to communicate and consult with all relevant stakeholders (the parties impacted by the risks and/or controls) at each stage of the fatigue risk management process.

Responsibilities

("the Company") has identified the following roles within our organisation with obligations for fatigue management, as:

- *<Insert person responsible in your business>*

Supporting policies and procedures

This procedure operates within the Risk Management Framework outlined in the Risk Management Policy and Procedure, Work Health and Safety Policy, and Fatigue Management Policy.

This procedure should be read and followed in conjunction with:

- Consultation and Communication Policy
- Hazard Observation Procedure
- Incident Management Procedure

Implementation and evaluation

("the Company") will ensure this Procedure is reviewed and evaluated for its effectiveness in delivering objectives on an annual basis or earlier in the event of major changes to the legislation or our organisation structure and operations.

Stress Reduction Strategies

Dr. Harold Minden identified four main categories of approaches to reducing stress. These are:

- Symptom reduction strategies
- Problem solving strategies
- Adaptation strategies
- Prevention strategies

Symptom reduction strategies

- Reducing physical tension by taking deep breaths, calming self through meditation, walking mindfully
- Using time off for exercise, reading, listening to music, taking a bath, talking to family, or having a special meal to recharge batteries
- Talking about emotions and reactions with co-workers during appropriate times
- Cognitive strategies (e.g. constructive self-talk, restructuring distortions)
- Relaxation techniques (e.g. yoga, meditation, guided imagery)
- Pacing self between low and high stress activities and between providing services alone and with support
- Talking with co-workers, friends, family, pastor, or counsellor about emotions and reactions
- **Some of the more common strategies include:**
 - Acupuncture

- Aromatherapy
- Exercise
- Religion
- Sex
- Rocking
- Swedish Massage
- Shiatsu
- Worry Beads
- Stress Balls
- Diet
- Music
- Biofeedback
- Pets

Meditation and Mindfulness

In today's busy world many people download relaxation music or meditation applications onto their smartphone or tablet, and this enables you to take guided meditation breaks whenever convenient.

For people beginning meditation or mindfulness, it is useful to use a guided session to assist you to become practiced in reaching the desired state of meditation, as often people think that meditation is the removal of all thoughts from your mind, when it is actually the ability to recognise thoughts and to gently move them aside to be able focus inward on peace and relaxation.

This does take some practice and guided sessions are very useful in the initial stages of learning.

This can be especially convenient for commuters on trains and buses or other modes of transport where you are a passenger and not in control of a vehicle

You can download both free and purchased meditation audio files and guided sessions from most app stores and the internet.

Problem solving strategies

Instead of helping to reduce the symptoms of stress, problem solving strategies serve to remove or cut off the source of stress. This involves identifying various sources of stress and thinking about the way that the problem might be solved. For those stressors that can be removed, problem solving strategies can have a major impact on your stress levels.

Adaptation strategies

Not all sources of stress can be removed or cut off. In some cases, we simply cannot change a stressful situation, and in these circumstances, it is important to find a way to adapt to the unchanging reality you face. This may mean making lifestyle-based decisions to either accept the

challenges you face by adapting or mapping out a practical strategy and timetable to move towards change.

Prevention strategies

Some events are cyclical and cause stress each time they come around, so it is important to recognise these triggers and plan to deal with them in the most effective manner. An example of these are deadlines and time management. Look for ways to prevent these stressors from having the same impact the next time around.

Joke

First Man while banging his head against a brick wall: "Oh this really hurts!"

Second Man: "Well why are you doing it?"

First Man: "Because it feels so good when I stop!"

Quote

"People are disturbed not by things, but their view of things". *Epictetus*
(Ancient Greek Stoic Philosopher)

Eliminating Stress from Your Environment

If your living and working environments are badly organised, they can be a major source of stress. If your environment is well organised and pleasant, it can help to reduce stress and increase productivity. Remember though that while it may be important for people under stress to have a calm environment, others may enjoy the raised levels of arousal associated with the 'buzz' of a busy office.

While the points listed below may each contribute only in a small way to creating a more pleasant environment, grouped together they can have a significant effect in reducing stress.

This section explains how you can reduce stress in your environment by improving:

- Air quality
- Lighting
- Decoration and tidiness
- Noise
- Furniture and ergonomics
- Personal space

Air quality

Poor air quality can make life unpleasant. The following factors can contribute to this problem:

- Smoking
- Air conditioning
- Heating

- Ionisation by electrical equipment
- Overcrowding
- Pollution
- Solvents e.g. carpets and furniture
- Excess humidity or dryness

You can do a number of things to improve air quality and reduce the stress caused by it including:

- Ban smoking
- Open windows
- Use an ioniser; this helps to freshen the air by eliminating positive ions created for e.g. electric motors powering computer fans
- Use dehumidifiers where humidity is a problem
- Introduce plants where the air is too dry. Evaporation of water from the plant pots or from the plants themselves will help to raise humidity. Plants also raise the amount of oxygen in the air and reduce stuffiness.

Lighting

Bad lighting can cause eye strain and increase fatigue, as can light that is too bright or light that shines directly into your eyes. Fluorescent lighting can also be tiring. What you may not appreciate is that the quality of light could also be important. Most people are happiest in bright sunshine - this may cause a release of chemicals in the body that brings a feeling of emotional well-being. Artificial light, which typically comprises only a few wavelengths of light, does not seem to have the same effect on mood as sunlight.

Try experimenting with working by a window or using full spectrum bulbs in your desk lamp. You will probably find that this improves the quality of your working environment.

Decoration and tidiness

If your environment at work or home is dirty, uncomfortable, or neglected, this can cause stress. Similarly, if your living or working area is untidy and chaotic this can be distracting. It is important however, not to be dogmatic about tidiness. While it is very difficult to successfully co-ordinate many tasks in an untidy work area, it is perfectly possible to work on one task successfully. The recent trend of 'clear desk' thinking arrogantly ignores one of the most important lessons about human beings; that people work in different ways.

Noise

Noise can cause intense stress. In a working environment a high level of background noise can severely impair your ability to concentrate. In an open plan office, the sound of people talking

casually, of office machinery, or of meetings going on can seriously undermine the quality of work done. Ringing telephones disturb not only the person to whom the call is directed but also other people in the same area. Large amounts of background noise during the day can cause irritability, tension and headaches in addition to loss of concentration.

Solutions to reducing noise at work can involve:

- Installation of partitions
- Use of meeting rooms separate from the main work area
- Use of quiet rooms when concentration is needed
- If all else fails - use of earplugs

Furniture and ergonomics

Another source of stress is muscular tension and pain caused by bad furniture or by bad use of good furniture. This normally shows itself in backache caused by badly designed chairs or by bad seating positions in properly designed chairs, although it can show itself in other ways. It is important to take the time to arrange your working environment so that it is comfortable. For example, when you consider that you may spend a large proportion of each day sitting in a seat, it is worth ensuring that it is not causing you pain or damaging your body.

If you work at a computer, then it is worth ensuring that the monitor and keyboard are comfortably positioned and that you are well-positioned relative to them. If you find that tendons in your hands get sore when you type for sustained periods, then it may be worth experimenting with a 'natural' keyboard. If you find that your eyes get sore when looking at a monitor or that you start to get headaches, try taking shorter breaks more often. If you feel that you are experiencing pain from your environment, it may be worth looking into ergonomics in more detail.

It is important to note that regular small breaks such as walking to the photocopier or changing your eye focus for a few minutes are more effective than any ergonomic item at alleviating stiffness and tension and reducing the chances of repetitive strain injuries. Recent research from workplace physiotherapists suggest that the most expensive ergonomic chair in the world will cease to support your muscles once you reach relaxation after a period of around 20-30 minutes.

Personal space

It is important for people to feel that they have sufficient personal space at work and at home. You may have experienced the dissatisfaction, stress, and irritation of working at a different desk each day, or of sleeping in a different hotel room each night. This unpleasant situation is largely caused by the lack of power to organise and control the space in which you operate.

Other people can also cause you stress when they impose themselves on your personal space, perhaps entering uninvited.

Self-Awareness

When examining the impacts of stress, it is imperative for staff and particularly management to learn the early warning signs, recognise these reactions in others and consider options to support them.

To support individual staff through stressful periods the following tips will assist:

- Accept that one may not be able to self-assess problematic stress reactions
- Explore your own motivations for helping (e.g. personal gratification, knowing when "helping" is not being helpful - it is about them)
- Understand the differences between professional helping, relationships, and friendships
- Examine your own personal prejudices and cultural stereotypes
- Recognise the discomfort, despair, hopelessness, and excessive anxiety that interfere with the capacity to be focussed at work
- Recognise when your own experience or losses interfere with effectiveness
- Be involved in opportunities for self-exploration and addressing emotions evoked by challenges at work

Signs and symptoms of worker stress

The symptoms of stress can be wide ranging and very different for each employee. It is important to be aware of these symptoms to not only recognise them in others but also in yourself. Signs and symptoms of worker stress can include:

Psychological and emotional

- Denial
- Anxiety and fear
- Worry about safety of self and others
- Anger
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Sadness, grief, depression, moodiness
- Distressing dreams
- Guilt or 'survivor guilt' (if there has been a re-structure or redundancies)
- Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless
- Feeling isolated, lost, or abandoned
- Apathy

Cognitive

- Memory problems
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Slowness of thinking and comprehension
- Difficulty calculating, setting priorities, making decisions
- Poor concentration
- Limited attention span
- Loss of objectivity
- Unable to stop thinking about the disaster
- Blaming

Behavioural

- Change in activity
- Decreased efficiency and effectiveness
- Difficulty communicating
- Increased sense of humour
- Outbursts of anger, frequent arguments
- Inability to rest or 'letdown'
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Change in patterns of intimacy, sexuality
- Change in job performance
- Periods of crying
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Social withdrawal, silence
- Vigilance about safety or environment
- Avoidance of activities or places that trigger memories
- Proneness to accidents

Physical

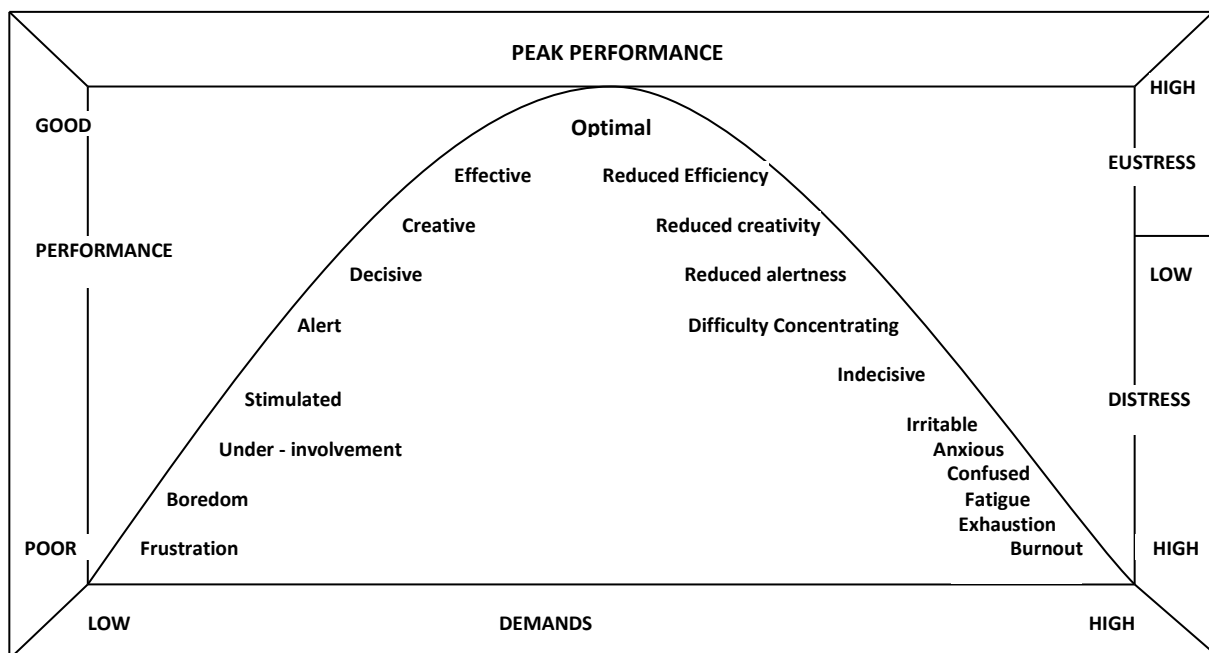
- Increased heartbeat, respiration
- Increased blood pressure
- Upset stomach, nausea, diarrhoea
- Change in appetite, weight loss or gain
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors (hands, lips)
- Muscle twitching

- 'Muffled' hearing
- Tunnel vision
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Headaches
- Soreness in muscles
- Lower back pain
- Feeling a 'lump in the throat'
- Exaggerated startle reaction
- Fatigue
- Menstrual cycle changes
- Change in sexual desire
- Decreased resistance to infection
- Flare-up of allergies and arthritis
- Hair loss

How much 'normal stress reaction' is too much?

We know that lower levels of stress can be productive and useful in our lives and high levels of stress can cause a range of problems. So how do we ensure the right amount of good stress and know when to manage the higher levels when they occur?

The following graph shows the Peak Performance Curve and how we process stress at different stages. It is useful in identifying the type of emotions experienced and when to intervene, particularly in the downward parts of the curve.



One specific workplace related program used to reduce stress and health related issues are the voluntary medical check-ups. This type of program can be greatly beneficial to both the employer

and employee by identifying health/medical issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and depression and anxiety symptoms associated with burnout or overwork. However many employers have experienced an employee backlash after implementing one of these programs where the employees have viewed the program as a way of identifying employee illnesses in order to remove staff who may prove to be a future risk from the company.

Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that planning, participation, and communication is carried out prior to implementation to ensure that the best possible outcomes can be achieved.

When implementing a workplace stress management program there are several guiding steps and stages to consider.

Preparation may be the single most important stage to ensuring a program's success and the following steps should be adhered to:

- Build general awareness about job stress (causes, costs, and control)
- Secure top management commitment and support for the stress reduction strategies or program
- Incorporate employee input and involvement
- Establish the technical capability to conduct the program (e.g. specialised training for in-house staff or use of job stress consultants)

During the initial planning stage, it is useful to secure commitment not only from employees, but to assist in uptake, from their representatives as well. This can include trade unions, health and safety representatives and any other employee groups that may be involved in the process (such as 'champions' or think groups). If you decide to confine your efforts to a limited section of your organisation, consider how best to inform other employees.

Strategy Development

Once the initial plans have been made and set and appropriate people have been consulted it is time to develop the strategy for implementing a stress management program within your organisation.

Each stage also has a check point so you can monitor successful outcomes throughout the process.

Step 1 - Identify the hazards

This can include:

- **Demands** – issues like workload, work patterns and the work environment
- **Control** – how much input that person has in the way they do their work

- **Support** – the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships** – promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- **Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

Conduct a risk assessment

Once the hazards are identified, conduct a risk assessment to evaluate those hazards.

- Describe the intent of early intervention stress management as a health management initiative
- Introduce the idea of risk assessments for stress related hazards
- Link this to the staff surveys and their findings where appropriate. Explain how we need to find out more specifically about what causes stress for people so that we can begin to think about ways of tackling it
- Try different kinds of questions e.g.:
 - What are the sources of stress in your job?
 - Are there any obstacles to you doing your job and if so, what are they?
 - Are there ways in which you would like to do your job differently? What would need to change for you to be able to do that?
 - Are there things which are preventing you from being as effective as you might be and if so, what are they?
 - Is there anything that gets in the way of your doing a good job?
 - Are there things that irritate you at work?
 - Are there aspects of your work that worry you?

Important tip: try to get specific details, for example if people describe ‘workload’ as a problem, this gives little information in itself. Asking “what is it about your workload that feels stressful?” could reveal more specific information such as:

- Work that is too difficult
- Not having the skills or knowledge to do the job

- Feeling the burden of responsibility
- Not having control over method and pace of work
- Work that carries an emotional burden
- Having conflicting tasks
- Feeling unsupported in the job
- Not being able to do work to an ideal standard

Checkpoint for Step 1: Getting started, look for the hazards

You are ready to implement stage two when the following have been completed. You have:

- Secured senior management commitment to tackling stress
- Involved employees and employee representatives in taking the work forward
- Informed employees of the latest developments and plans for the next steps
- Recorded what you have done

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

In step two identify exactly who may be impacted by the hazards identified in Stage 1. Consider:

- High levels of sickness absence
- Reduce the perceived stigma
- Low productivity
- High employee turnover
- Performance appraisals
- Team meetings and focus groups

Checkpoint for Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

You have been effective in stage two when you have:

- Acknowledged that stress has the potential to affect any member of staff
- Considered the data available to you to indicate any potential problem areas
- Measured your performance against management standards
- Identified any stress 'hot-spots' in your organisation
- Recorded what you have done

Step 3 - Evaluate the risk and take action

In step three it is crucial to use all the information available from Steps 1 and 2 to link problems to solutions to enable action.

- Use focus groups to find solutions and gain employee buy-in
- Identify what solutions are going to work for your organisation
- Communicate the results to others by:
 - Providing feedback
 - Addressing individual concerns

Checkpoint for Step 3:

Step three has been completed when the following has taken place. You have:

- Consulted with employees to discuss problem areas in more detail
- Worked in partnership with employees and their representatives to develop actions
- Ensured that the issues affecting individuals are addressed
- Fed back results to employees with a commitment to follow-up
- Recorded what you have done

Step 4 - Record your findings

The most important factor for successful completion of this step is to use the information recorded to make a plan and stick to it.

When developing an action plan consider and include the following:

- What the problem is
- How the problem was identified
- What you are going to do in response
- How you arrived at this solution
- Some key milestones and dates for them to be reached
- A commitment to provide feedback to employees on progress
- A date for reviewing against the plan

Checkpoint for Step 4:

Step four is complete when you have:

- Created and agreed with senior management, employees, and their representatives an action plan for the implementation of solutions

- Shared your action plan with all employees, including dates for monitoring and review

Step 5 - Monitor and review

In the final step of this process it is important to celebrate the milestones that you have achieved so far. This step includes:

- Measuring and sharing your success
- Evaluating how to review your work
- Monitoring against your action plan
- Evaluating the effectiveness of solutions
- Using follow-up surveys

Work-related Psychological Injuries

The instances of stress related work injuries have significantly increased over the last 10 years and this continues to be one of the most difficult and costly injuries for businesses to manage.

The main reasons are that stress can be very different from one person to the next making it difficult for employers to predict and plan and only the employee fully understands the effects it is having on them, as usually unless there are physical indicators, a doctor is not able to make a medical diagnosis.

Because of this, the demand for occupational health psychological services has dramatically increased and more employers are using the services of counsellors through Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's). Employee Assistance Programs are usually outsourced to Clinical Psychologists who provide a first contact counselling service usually funded by the company with employees having access to up to 3 visits per year at no cost. The EAP providers deal with stress related issues before they can manifest into serious medical conditions and they can be invaluable in assisting employees experiencing grief through loss or illness or dealing with workplace related stress issues.

Managing work related stress claims

When managing a work-related stress claim there are a number of factors which will increase the likelihood of a successful return to work for the employee.

Using an integrated approach which involves the employee, their supervisor, their doctor and any other health professionals will ensure not only that the employee feels supported but also that you have all the information available to make the best decisions for both the employee and the business.

Management of the stakeholders through this process can include professionals such as:

- Treating medical and other health practitioners
- Compensation claims officers
- Rehabilitation coordinators
- Relevant co-workers and line managers
- Senior management
- Family members
- Employee assistance service

Please remember that there is a fine balance between confidentiality and keeping stakeholders informed, especially other staff members. If you are unsure, gain consent from the employee involved.

How to manage smartphones and stress

With the fast-paced workplace and the exponential growth of technology including artificial intelligence, driverless, vehicles, and the state of the world politics in general there is an increased level of anxiety being exhibited in individuals and some workplaces.

One of the most innocuous and widely used contributors to anxiety and depression has been found in numerous recent studies to be the smartphone and our dependence on this piece of equipment.

Dr. Nancy Cheever, who spearheaded research on the relationship between cell phone use and anxiety at California State University, Dominguez Hills found that the more people use their phone, the more anxious they are about using their phone.

Cheever's research suggests that phone-induced anxiety operates on a positive feedback loop, saying that phones keep us in a persistent state of anxiety and the only relief from this anxiety is to look at our phones.

An interesting US survey by KDA Engineering revealed while 60% of people think they touch their phone about 100 times or less each day, in fact, a typical user taps, touches or wipes their phone 2,617 times each day!

The study also explored smartphone etiquette and found:

- 70% of people think it is wrong to bring smartphones to meetings, but 53% do it anyway
- 80% think it is wrong to check phones during meetings, but 50% surreptitiously do so anyway; and

- 20% of people check their phone every 20 minutes.

Many people have become so reliant on smartphones that they suffer from separation anxiety when they are away from their phones or they lose or damage them.

It is widely recognised that overuse of screen time particularly before bedtime can adversely affect sleep patterns.

Many smartphones now come with screen time indicators so that their owners can monitor their daily screen time and adjust their habits accordingly.

Smartphones have become such an integral component of our daily lives that often health and wellbeing suffer as a result of constantly checking phones for texts, applications, the latest news and a multitude of other uses. We often forget to take a break from technology and take a walk or chill out for a period each day without the company of a smartphone.

Some basic strategies to assist employees who are demonstrating signs of smartphone addiction or increased levels of anxiety and depression are:

- Switch off your phone a couple of hours before you go to sleep at home (smartphones interfere with our bodies' circadian rhythms, causing sleep deprivation and potentially impacting mental health)
- Leave your mobile in your bag or locker when attending movies, concerts, meetings, and seminars. (And do not take them to the loo — it's distasteful hearing people's phone conversations from the next stall!)
- Try a digital break on public transport. Read a book or newspaper or take in the scenery while you travel
- Go for walks and swims or exercise on a regular basis — digital detoxing is an excellent practice
- Consider turning off notifications if possible or using flight mode for a period of time
- Value the time you spend with others.
- Value your health and wellbeing and make it a work in progress.
- Turn off the phone while driving or put it on Do Not Disturb while driving (available on some phones)

Make sure that you have policy to cover the use of mobile phones etc in the workplace (also refer to Smart Guide No. 5 - Social Media, Mobile Devices, Internet, and Email in the Workplace).

Summary

Stress management in the workplace can be difficult to monitor and control, however it is one of the most effective and least used methods for providing assistance to staff and helping them remain productive in their roles.

When implementing a stress management program there are a number of steps that when followed will not only be effective in reducing stress, but also compliment and assist with other business initiatives such as leadership development, WH&S strategies and performance management.

When considering stress management, it is important to determine your own needs and symptoms before being able to assist others.

Key points to remember when managing your own stress include:

- Create a pleasant environment for yourself
- Keep perfectionism in check
- Manage your time
- Avoid false guilt
- Do not worry about things others are doing that are out of your control
- Drive your own bus
- Be selective about what you take on
- Plan and prioritise
- Develop a support system for yourself
- Look after body and soul
- Accept stress as a natural part of life

Key tips on reducing stress for your employees include:

- Be reasonable in your expectations
- Be decisive, clear, and unambiguous
- Create a supportive work environment
- Be alert to the value of self-esteem
- Communicate with each staff member
- Plan ahead
- Involve employees in the decision making
- Be consistent in disciplinary matters
- Be an effective gatekeeper
- Provide adequate resources
- Always follow through

- Provide variety in an employee's life
- Check your personal style for defects

The implications of high levels of stress can have a devastating effect on today's business.

Having a sound and effective stress management program in the workplace not only ensures that employees are happy, it also meets the ethical standards of the company, and assists with meeting WH&S compliance requirements while also making good strategic business sense.

Table of Amendments

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