

Stress is a normal part of our lives. Different people experience stress in different ways, but all of us can benefit from workplaces where harmful stress is taken seriously, stress hazards are addressed before they cause harm and work expectations are designed to manage workplace stress at healthy levels.

What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury. A certain amount of healthy workplace stress is expected and can be constructive when it pushes us to be focused, efficient and productive. If work expectations are more than we think we can handle, stress can have harmful effects like making us feel overwhelmed or distracted, or causing muscle tension or headaches. Long-term stress can affect workers and employers alike and has been associated with many health conditions including anxiety, high blood pressure and heart disease. Stress can also contribute to workplace incidents when it causes workers to sleep poorly, over-medicate, or feel depressed, anxious or angry on the job.

It is important to note that normal pressures and tensions of employment will not give rise to a compensable injury. This includes reasonable workplace expectations and actions such as hiring, firing, promotions, demotions, lay-offs, transfers or workload fluctuations.

Below are examples of hazards that may contribute to harmful workplace stress. Which could happen in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Examples of hazards that may contribute to harmful stress include:

- excessive workload
- inadequate time to complete tasks
- lack of training
- uncertain or unclear job expectations
- job insecurity
- inadequate systems in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour
- lack of support
- threat of violence or harassment
- exposure to unpleasant conditions or physical hazards without adequate mitigations in place

What does effective workplace stress management look like?

Required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments and identify any hazards in their workplaces, including harassment hazards
- employers must have safe work procedures for identified hazards that cannot be eliminated
- employers must offer training to employees on safe work procedures for all hazards that require mitigation
- employers must have procedures for reporting, investigating, and documenting incidents and injuries, and offer training to employees on those procedures

Talk leader instructions:

- This is background information ONLY.
- Be sure to customize to your organization.
- Consider printing copies of this sheet for yourself and each participant.
- Lead a discussion with your workers about the materials on this sheet.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible. Be open to questions.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Fill in the name of your organization, location and the date on your sheet. Have each worker sign your sheet to confirm their attendance.
- File your sheet in your worker records to document the Safety Talk.

There are many additional steps that **supervisors** can take to help control stress and reduce its impact on workers. Which of these would be possible in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Steps supervisors can take to manage workplace stress include:

- treat all employees in a fair and respectful manner
- be inclusive and encourage employee input
- take harmful stress seriously
- proactively look for signs of stress among staff
- be supportive of staff having trouble with stress
- design jobs to allow for a balanced workload
- recognize workers' results and skills
- have clear job expectations

There are also many steps **workers** can take to help control the effects of workplace stress. Which of these would be possible in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Steps workers can take to help manage workplace stress:

- get to know how and when you react to harmful and healthy stress
- ask for help when you are feeling overly stressed
- offer help to others when you see them struggling
- get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet
- get regular physical activity
- set goals and manage your time with a calendar
- schedule downtime every day and use vacation time to refresh
- recognize your strengths and take pride in your achievements

What are possible benefits of effectively managing workplace stress?

Employers, supervisors and workers can all benefit from workplaces with effective stress management practices. Below are some examples of these benefits. Which of these could apply in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Benefits of effectively managing workplace stress could include:

- increased job satisfaction
- greater staff engagement
- increased attendance and productivity
- decreased workplace conflict
- lower turnover and higher retention
- improved retention
- lower disability claim costs
- improved bottom line

Discussion questions:

1. How does your workplace help manage worker stress?
2. What actions can you take to promote stress management in your workplace?

More information:

If you have questions about stress management in your workplace, please contact:

- Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, 867-667-5450 or 1-800-661-0443 or worksafe@gov.yk.ca

Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help workplaces understand and comply with workplace health and safety laws. It is not legal advice and is not intended to replace the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act, S.Y. 2021, c.11* and *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations*.

Safety Talk record:

Print and complete this page or fill in electronically, then save as a record of your Safety Talk.

Comments/suggestions

Organization name

Safety Talk leader

Date

Safety Talk participants

print name

signature
