



Trainees - Apprentices  
Labour Hire - Training

# Health and Safety Psychological Hazard Procedure

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## 1. Purpose

Ensuring all ATC Work Smart staff are emotionally supported and remain productive and engaged workers. This procedure describes what psychological health is, common workplace hazards that create a risk to psychological health and the importance of systematically identifying, assessing and eliminating or managing these hazards.

## 2. Scope

ATC Work Smart will take reasonably practicable steps to develop and implement a systematic and consistent approach to the identification of psychological hazards and management of risks to ensure that workers and other persons are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from psychological hazards.

It is recognised that exposure to psychological hazards can lead to workers experiencing stress. Prolonged stress at work will, in some cases, result in mental health disorders or may exacerbate existing disorders. Even when workplace stress does not lead to a mental health disorder it is recognised that stress can have an impact on physical health and other aspects of people's lives outside of work.

ATC Work Smart recognises that developing a psychologically healthy organisation (through primary interventions) is the most effective method of eliminating and reducing the impact of psychological hazards on the organisation and the individual. ATC Work Smart will reinforce the use of primary interventions with the use of individually focused strategies such as training (secondary interventions) and the support and treatment of individuals after exposure to psychological stressors (tertiary interventions).

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### **Managers**

- > Utilise a risk assessment process to identify and manage any risks associated with psychosocial hazards within their area of responsibility.
- > Consult with workers during the identification and management of risks associated with psychosocial hazards.
- > Ensure workers are not placing themselves at risk of injury as result of psychosocial hazards.

### **Field Officers/Recruitment Consultants**

- > Monitor psychosocial hazards of on-hire workers within their area of responsibility
- > Ensure on-hire workers are not placing themselves at risk of injury as result of psychosocial hazards
- > Consult with host employers during the identification and management of risks associated with psychosocial hazards

### **Workers**

- > Support their manager to identify psychosocial hazard risk factors and appropriate controls to manage these risks.
- > Take responsibility for the management of their own stress levels, ensuring they turn up fit for work in a state that enables them to conduct their work in a safe manner.
- > Notify their line supervisor or manager if they believe their ability to safely undertake their duties is impaired due to psychosocial hazards.

## 4. What is Psychological Health?

Psychological Health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual can cope with the stresses of life, develop strong and positive relationships and work productively as a member of society.

The best way to have psychologically healthy workers and a psychologically healthy organisation is to provide good work. This will ensure ATC Work Smart retains productive and engaged workers and protects workers from injury. Good work is characterised by work that is meaningful, varied, provides an appropriate balance between effort and reward and allows the worker a sense of control. Workers participating in good work feel appreciated and supported by their managers. By focusing on the organisational systems that create psychological healthy workplaces and good work, ATC Work Smart aims to enhance workers' overall mental health and wellbeing and support workers to be productive members of our workplace and community.

Psychologically healthy organisations are characterised by:

- > A purposeful organisation with a culture of respectful behaviour
- > Organisational justice and fair and equitable systems of work
- > Supportive leadership
- > Positive team relationships
- > Reasonable demands (and manageable workloads)
- > Control and a say over how to do the work
- > Clear reporting lines
- > Meaningful work and role clarity
- > Physically safe work environments
- > Regular feedback and performance discussions
- > Opportunities to use existing skills and develop new skills
- > Job control and input from workers in decision making
- > A process for identifying and managing psychological risks.

Psychological stress is experienced when the individual's capacity to cope is exceeded by the demands placed on them. It is recognised that exposure to psychological hazards may lead to workers experiencing stress. Prolonged stress at work may result in mental health disorders or may exacerbate existing disorders. Even when workplace stress does not lead to a mental health disorder it is recognised that stress can have an impact on physical health and other aspects of peoples' lives outside of work.

## 5. Mental health

Many workers will experience mental illness during their lives and ATC Work Smart aims to reduce the stigma of mental illness in the workplace and support workers to remain at work. ATC Work Smart recognises the importance of work in restoring mental health and aim to provide a supportive environment for this to occur. To achieve this aim, ATC Work Smart encourages the participation of

managers and workers in educational mental health programs to reduce stigma and help all workers talk openly about mental illness and seek support from available services.

## 6. Psychosocial hazards and risk factors

*Examples of work-related psychosocial hazards*

Potential Hazards	Organisational	Leadership & Management	Job	Relationships
<b>Job Resources</b> (Lack of resources may increase stress)	Purpose of organisation Organisational justice Mental health support	Leader & manager support Feedback & recognition	Role clarity & purpose Job control Resources (Time, people, equipment) Job-person fit	Co-worker support
<b>Job Demands</b> (Excess demands may create stress)			Workload Cognitive demands Emotional demands Conflicting demands	Conflict (Bullying and harassment)
<b>Additional factors</b> (May increase stress)	Unsafe work environment (dirty, noisy, isolated or potentially violent) Existing physical and mental health of worker Work-life balance Job security			

Evidence of workers experiencing job stress through exposure to psychological hazards may be seen through:

- > Excessive or unusual patterns of sick leave
- > High staff turnover and burnout
- > Withdrawal behaviours (e.g. not participating in work meetings and discussions)
- > Negative behaviours (e.g. disrespectful behaviour or misconduct)
- > Presenteeism (e.g. workers attending work while they are unwell and being unproductive)
- > Performance issues
- > Patient safety incidents
- > Safety errors and physical injuries
- > Mental illness (with anxiety and depression the most common disorders).

## 7. Managing the Risks

The management of ATC Work Smart will systematically and proactively eliminate or minimise psychological hazards at work. All managers must identify psychological hazards in their area and complete a risk assessment on these hazards.

ATC Work Smart will minimise risks from psychological hazards using appropriate controls.

There are three main categories of control measures to eliminate or minimise psychological hazards. The following three categories of controls work together to create a psychologically healthy organisation and protect the worker from harm:

- I. Primary interventions support positive organisational culture and systems of work. Primary interventions are systematic processes to design work that is clearly defined, meaningful and achievable within an environment of supportive leadership and positive behaviour. Primary interventions are the most effective way to eliminate psychological hazards and prevent injury.
- II. Secondary interventions focus on increasing the individual worker's capacity to cope with psychological hazards they may potentially be exposed to. These interventions may involve training in skills such as conflict resolution, resilience, mindfulness or stress management. These interventions are a helpful addition and support primary interventions.
- III. Tertiary interventions are implemented once exposure to a psychological hazard has occurred. The ATC Work Smart Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is an example of a tertiary intervention. Tertiary interventions are designed to reduce the impact of the hazard on the individual and/or to assist in recovery from psychological injury.

It is important to note that managing risks to psychological health does not preclude reasonable management actions such as managing poor performance.

## 8. Hazard Identification

ATC Work Smart managers will identify any psychological hazards in the work area. Hazards are things or situations which have the potential to cause harm including psychological injury.

Psychological hazards can be identified through:

- > Regular Worksite Safety Inspections that involve discussions with workers
- > Observations of worker behaviour and workplace interactions
- > Sick leave patterns and turnover
- > Discussions with workers (e.g., team meetings and individual discussions)
- > Complaints and grievances from workers
- > Incident and injury data / reports.

When a psychological health hazard is reported or identified, a preliminary assessment should be conducted by the manager, in consultation with the worker or workgroup involved. Managers need to ensure natural justice and ensure the privacy of all individuals if the actions (or alleged actions) of another person are involved.

## 9. Risk Assessment

When it is not possible to eliminate an identified psychological hazard immediately a risk assessment must be conducted. The risk assessment should be completed by the manager in consultation with

affected workers and Health and Safety Committee Representative, where relevant, to ensure suitable risk control measures are identified and implemented.

***Refer to: WHS Risk Management Procedure***

For each hazard the risk assessment should:

- > Identify whether the hazard is likely to result in psychological injury
- > Identify which workers are most at risk of exposure to the hazard
- > The consequence if exposure occurs
- > The likely outcomes for workers from exposure to the hazards
- > Determine the risk control measure(s) to implement
- > Review the effectiveness of existing control measures.

## 10. Risk Control Measures

When managing psychological hazards appropriate risk control measures must be implemented to eliminate or reduce the risks through primary interventions that improve organisational systems and reduce worker distress. Where the risk is unable to be eliminated, consideration should be given to how primary and secondary interventions may be implemented to reduce the risk.

***For examples of control measures refer to appendix 1 in this document.***

## 11. Monitor and Review

Any implemented control measure must be reviewed in consultation with relevant workers to ensure that it remains adequate.

Steps in the review may include:

- > information from workers via surveys and consultation
- > a review of accident and incident data (stress-related)
- > observations and anecdotal reports.

## 12. Training and Education

In order to reduce the risk to a worker's health and safety arising from psychological hazards in the workplace, appropriate information, training, instruction and supervision must be provided to any worker on the following:

- > Clear information on the work to be performed and results to be achieved
- > The standards by which the work will be assessed
- > Information about respectful behaviour in the workplace
- > Information about how to report a psychological hazard
- > Information about existing strategies to reduce the risk of psychological injury
- > Information about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and how to access it.

## 13. Consultation and Communication

All affected workers should be consulted when identifying psychological hazards and developing solutions to these hazards.

#### 14. Reporting and Incident Management

Efficiency and timely hazard and incident reporting, investigation and resolution is an integral component of a successful and compliant safe work system.

Where a psychological injury has been sustained by a worker, the injury must also be reported . All injuries must be reported within 24 hours, regardless of whether a claim for workers compensation will be made.

***Refer to: Incident, Hazard reporting and Investigation procedure.***

## Appendix 1: examples of control measures.

Control	Examples
<b>Elimination</b>	
Eliminate exposure to psychosocial hazards, so far as is reasonably practicable	<p>Address psychosocial hazards and risk factors at their source by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applying principles of good job design</li> <li>• clearly defining job roles, reporting structures and activities</li> <li>• establishing achievable workloads and performance targets that match resources (e.g. number of workers, skills mix, fit-for-purpose equipment)</li> <li>• maintaining a workplace culture that is knowledgeable about psychosocial hazards, risks and controls, and encourages help-seeking behaviour</li> <li>• providing access to reliable communication infrastructure and supportive technology</li> <li>• using online systems instead of in-person services</li> </ul>
<b>Risk minimisation</b>	
Reduce likelihood and severity of harm from exposure to psychosocial hazards and risk factors	<p>Minimise harm by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educating leaders on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– how they influence the development and maintenance of a mentally healthy workplace</li> <li>– control strategies and their implementation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• implementing a structured change management process, including consultation with workers, for significant organisational changes</li> <li>• supporting engagement with family and social networks</li> <li>• providing workers with control over the order and pace of jobs</li> <li>• rotating jobs for repetitive or highly demanding tasks</li> <li>• adjusting workloads</li> <li>• modifying the built environment to address environmental factors (e.g. soundproofing, thermal comfort, adequate lighting)</li> <li>• providing sufficient resources to complete the job safely and on time</li> <li>• minimising role confusion by clearly defining workers' tasks, duties and performance standards</li> <li>• increasing practical and emotional support during peak work periods</li> <li>• monitoring peak workloads and rostering additional workers during peak work periods</li> <li>• making reasonable work adjustments</li> <li>• facilitating the reporting of psychosocial hazards (without fear of negative consequences)</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative and PPE</b>	
Address adverse health effects from exposure to psychosocial hazards and risk factors	<p>Address adverse health effects from exposure to psychosocial hazards and risk factors by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having policies and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– for timely welfare checks when workers do not report to work or are missing from work</li> <li>– to manage and respond to critical and traumatic events</li> <li>– supporting diversity and inclusion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• facilitating the reporting of incidents</li> <li>• investigating injuries, incidents and complaints, and communicating remedial actions to the worker and workplace as appropriate</li> <li>• educating and informing workers on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– healthy coping strategies</li> <li>– accessing supporting resources (e.g. support programs)</li> <li>– identifying the early signs of distress and what to do</li> </ul> </li> <li>• supporting access to health professionals and confidential counselling</li> <li>• providing access to an employee assistance program (EAP) for work and non-work concerns</li> <li>• having emergency response and crisis management plans that address mental health scenarios, including suicidal behaviour</li> <li>• having maintain-at-work and return-to-work programs</li> <li>• providing individual skills training (e.g. conflict resolution)</li> </ul>