Psychosocial hazards

Small Mines Roadshow 2024

February to April 2024

What are psychosocial hazards?

The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 identifies a psychosocial hazard as one that arises from, or relates to:

- the design or management of work, or

- work environment, or

- plant (equipment) at a workplace, or

- workplace interactions and behaviour, and

- may cause psychological harm, regardless of whether is also causes physical harm

Common psychosocial hazards at work

The way tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised

Tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards or risks

Equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments, and

Social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

Some common psychosocial hazards and example

Hazard type	Examples-some
High work demands	Long working hours not allowing adequate recovery time Unachievable task deadlines or expectations
Low work demands	Highly repetitive and monotonous tasks
Role conflict or lack of role clarity	Conflicting job roles, frequent changes to tasks work standards and schedules
Bullying and harassment	Repeated unreasonable behaviour towards a worker or group of workers. Single or repeated forms of harassment including sexual harassment
Poor working environments	Frequent work in poor quality hazardous working environment
Poor organisational change or consultation	Poor consultation or communications about significant work changes
Low job control	Workers have little control over aspects of the work including how to get the job done.

Identifying and assessing psychosocial risks

Step One	Identify psychosocial hazards	What are the psychosocial hazards in your workplace? This can extend from workplace interactions to organization-wide systems, workplace practices and culture issues
Step Two	Assess and prioritise the psychosocial hazards and risks	A risk assessment should be conducted when you are unclear what psychosocial hazards may cause harm and if changes may impact the effectiveness of controls. In addition, for high-risk activities a structured task analysis may assist.
Step Three	Control psychosocial hazards and risks	Eliminate or minimise risk through good work design; consider safe systems of work, what information training, instruction or supervision is required and control residual risk.
Step Four	Proactively implement, maintain, monitor and review the effectiveness of controls	Allocation of accountabilities for monitoring, reviewing and maintaining controls. Do not assume risks will not change or that controls will remains suitable, sufficient and effective over time.

Identifying and assessing psychosocial risks

Step 1	Step 2
Identify psychosocial hazards	Assess and prioritise the psychosocial hazards and risks
What are the psychosocial hazards in your workplace? This can extend from workplace interactions to organisational wide systems, workplace practices and culture issues	A risk assessment should be conducted when you are unclear what psychosocial hazards may cause harm and if changes may impact the effectiveness of controls. In addition, for high-risk activities a structured task analysis may assist.

Identifying and assessing psychosocial risks

Step 3	Step 4
Control psychosocial hazards and risks	Proactively implement, maintain, monitor and review the effectiveness of controls
Eliminate or minimise risk through good work design; consider safe systems of work, what information training, instruction or supervision is required and control residual risk.	Allocation of accountabilities for monitoring, reviewing and maintaining controls.

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Small mines example

Scenario

- A new employee has commenced work as a loader operator driving a truck.

- This is their first job in a quarry environment, working 10 hours shifts that are predominately Monday to Friday day shift.

- Wet weather has impacted the quarry's production, and the quarry supervisor has pushed the new loader operator to drive no matter the road conditions.

- The new employee has requested some additional support from the supervisor but due to the supervisor being busy, this request has not been responded too.

- The new employee is reluctant to ask for help from other employees as they have noticed some negative attitudes after starting in the role .

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Psychosocial hazards

Low job control-The individual has only commenced at the mine and may not feel empowered to speak up in fear of losing their job.

Poor role clarity-The new employee may not be aware of their responsibilities.

Poor support-Supervisor (even though it may not be the intention) is not reacting to the employees needs or requests.

Role underload-the task of operating a truck is monotonous and repetitive.

Poor workplace relationships-the new employee does not feel welcome within the workplace from their work colleagues.

Psychosocial controls

A review of the mine's safety management system and health control plan should occur to ensure:

1	Workers are empowered to seek assistance if they need more help to complete a task
2	Workers are aware how to escalate an issue if it is not resolved by a supervisor
3	Supervisors receive additional support and training on how to manage young or inexperienced workers
4	A system is available to mentor or buddy new employees on site to provide additional support and assistance
5	Set out the behavioural expectations of all workers on site and established procedures and processes for managing workplace conflicts, bullying and inappropriate conduct.

Review and improve

Remember to regularly review and update the mine's safety management system, and health control plan with regards to psychosocial hazards. This is particularly important if an incident has occurred, or a complaint has been lodged.

Seek and receive feedback from new employees on how to improve the training process. Workers have some great idea or solutions.

Undertake a review of workplace grievances to identify areas of conflict.

Thank you

QUESTIONS?