Psychosocial hazards: causes & solutions

Psychosocial hazard	Possible causes	Possible solutions
High job demands Jobs that require continual high physical, mental or emotional effort	• Long work hours • High workload • Fast-paced work or significant time pressure • Long periods of alertness for irregular events (e.g. air traffic controllers) • Shift work	• Monitor employee workloads • Where possible, allow employees to self-manage their workloads • Encourage employees to talk to their manager if they're have any workload pressures • Make sure workloads and tasks match employees' abilities and experiences • Avoid letting employees move from one demanding project straight to another
Low job demands Jobs that require low physical, mental or emotional effort	• Little to no work • Repetitive work	• Encourage employees to talk to their manager if they feel they don't have enough to do • Allow employees to explore internal positions they may feel better qualified for
Low job control Jobs where employees have little control over how and when a job is done	• Machine or computer-paced work • Tightly managed work • Employees not involved in decisions affecting them or their clients	• Where possible, let employees set work-related goals, have a say in how their work is organised and when breaks are taken • Involve employees in the allocation of tasks and the establishment of objectives, timeframes and resources • Communicate decisions with employees that might affect them in advance
Poor support Jobs or tasks where the employee has little to no practical or emotional support	• Little to no inclusion or empathy from managers or co-workers for work or personal struggles • No leave given for urgent personal matters or appointments • Provided inadequate training and information to perform job or tasks • Provided inadequate tools and resources to complete tasks on time	• Provide opportunities, such as an employee assistance program, where employees can express their work concerns or personal issues • Create a culture that encourages team work and collaboration, and discourages gossip • Management should be approachable, visible in the workplace with an open-door policy • Offer opportunities for training and mentoring to develop and enhance skill sets • Provide flexible working arrangements and approve leave for personal matters
Poor workplace relationships Jobs where employees are physically or emotionally hurt, treated unfairly or work in a toxic company culture	• Workplace bullying, aggression or harrassment, discrimination or unreasonable behaviour • Poor relationships and/or conflict between an employee and their managers, supervisor or co-workers • Lack of fairness and equity in the handling of organisational issues • Poorly managed performance issues	• Treat all employees equally and allocate work responsibilities fairly • Have clear and consistent procedures for dealing with complaints and inappropriate behaviour in a timely and confidential manner • Ensure all employees have equal opportunity to respond to any allegations regarding issues of misconduct • Make employees aware of other avenues to raise their concerns, like union representatives

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Low role clarity Jobs where there is confusion or change to the role	• Uncertainty about, or frequent changes to, tasks and work standards • Important task information not available • Being told conflicting expectations from different managers	• Make sure employees have clear, adequately detailed and up-to-date job descriptions that clarify responsibilities and expectations • Provide employee inductions and suitable training for each role • Avoid giving roles that may cause conflict between an employee's personal beliefs and professional demands • Have clear reporting lines and avoid having employees reporting to more than one manager
Poor organisational change management Workplaces affected by major changes	• Lack of consideration of potential WHS/OHS issues and performance impacts during downsizing, relocation or introduction of new technology or procedures • Lack of consultation, communication and support between key stakeholders and staff during transition times	• Inform and prepare staff in advance of any proposed changes to their work environment, duties or responsibilities • Provide adequate training and support during before, during and after times of change • Be honest and transparent in communications with staff, particularly regarding factors affecting the organisation such as re-structure or merger with another organisation • Have strategies to support those who will lose their jobs and those who may feel insecure about their job future
Low recognition and reward Jobs where employee satisfaction is ignored	• Lack of positive feedback and informal recognition or reward • No opportunity for skill development or career advancement • Skills and experience are not used adequately	• Set realistic and agreed goals and deadlines, and provide the support and resources to achieve them • Acknowledge and reward individual and team achievements, and celebrate organisational accomplishments and milestones • Provide opportunities for learning, personal development and career advancement • Provide positive and constructive feedback in performace reviews and focus on skill development not failings
Poor organisational justice Unfair and biased workplace culture	• Policies and procedures are not consistently followed • Unfairness or bias in decisions regarding who performs certain tasks or recieves certain resources • Poor management of those who are under-performing	• Recruit employees based on merit, person-job fit and competence, and promote employees based on performance • Have a fair and transparent process for awarding salary increases and bonuses • Engage employees in the development of policies and procedures that will affect them

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Poor environmental conditions Jobs where there is exposure to poor quality or hazardous work environments	• Hazardous manual tasks • Working near unsafe machinery • Environmental factors such as poor air quality, high noise levels or extreme temperatures	• Ensure appropriate controls are implemented to reduce risks and ensure the safety of employees working on hazardous tasks • Where possible, make sure work areas have enough lighting, are well-ventilated and are at a comfortable temperature • For any work processes that release harmful substances, have controls in place to extract the substance at the source
Remote & isolated work Jobs where the work location is far from others, or where the employee is working alone or with a few other people	• Resources, communication and emergency assistance are difficult to access • Travel times may be long • Job examples are farmers, real estate agents, nurses who conduct night visits, night shift workers for petrol stations and convienance stores, and fly-in fly-out workers	• Make sure you are in regular communication with employees • Ensure employees have a means of communication for emergencies • Make sure employees have access to clean, safe and well-functioning facilities • Manage fatigue particularly for those frequently travelling • Where possible, give employees the option to reside in local communities
Violent or traumatic events A workplace incident where the employee has been exposed to or threatened with abuse or harm that has caused fear or distress **Secondary or vicarious trauma** Those who have witnessed a fatality or investigated an injury or fatality	• Employees have been robbed, assaulted, bitten, spat on, scratched, kicked or threatened with a weapon • Job examples where this occurs regularly are first responders, disaster and emergency service workers and defence personnel • Employees who repeatedly listen to individuals' detailed descriptions of of traumatic and painful events • Job examples of where this occurs are child protection workers, lawyers, police officers, journalists and custom officers	• Prepare workers, particularly police and emergency services roles, for the types of situations they may be exposed to • Provide information, guidance and training on the impact of these potentially traumatic situations and how to respond to them with confidence and resilience • Train leaders to have the confidence and skills to identify, and consult with, individuals who may be struggling • Implement processes to monitor exposure to trauma, and consider screening employees for post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health difficulties • Create a culture that removes any stigma towards mental health difficulties