



PSYCHO SOCIAL RISK

Kia Ora Koutou!

Welcome to the latest edition of Life Care's newsletter! In our second delivery of the year, we're diving into a topic that's gaining more and more awareness across industries and receiving attention from governments worldwide: Psychosocial risk and the work towards mentally healthy workplaces.

In this edition, we'll explore how to identify hazards and manage risks associated with mentally unhealthy work environments, and we'll share practical actions for creating and maintaining a supportive atmosphere for mental well-being in the workplace.

Let's embark on this journey together and discover ways to cultivate a positive and mentally healthy work environment.

Ready? Let's do this! – Kua reri koe? Me mahi tenei!

Navigating Psychosocial Challenges in 2024

In New Zealand workplaces, traditional health and safety efforts have heavily prioritised physical safety and injury prevention, with relatively little attention given to understanding the relationship between mental well-being and workplace dynamics. This could be due to the difficulty of identifying and addressing psychosocial risks related to mental health at work, as well as determining whether the harm experienced is directly linked to work or arises from other factors in the individual's life.

The ACC system has focused on physical injuries resulting from accidents, overlooking mental distress unless directly linked to a physical event. However, there's a noticeable shift underway in recognising broader work-related health issues. For instance, in 2020, WorkSafe issued a position statement titled '**Supporting Mentally Healthy Work**', defining what constitutes a mentally healthy workplace and emphasising its significance.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 states: *The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) requires PCBUs to provide and maintain a work environment that is without risks to safety and health, **including mental health**, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

What is a psychological hazard and what does it look like in the workplace?

According to WorkSafe "a work-related psychosocial hazard (or risk) is an adverse workplace interaction or condition of work that compromises a worker's health and wellbeing."

It's crucial to recognise which psychosocial hazards might affect your specific business and how much harm they could do. Assessing the level of risk each hazard poses can help decide which actions to prioritise for keeping everyone safe.

Here are some examples of psychosocial hazards and how they could be associated with different industries:



Psychosocial Hazards (Examples) \ Industries	Retail	Manu- facturing	Construction	Services	Transport. /Logistics	Health care	Education	Government
Strict and inflexible work schedules	X	X			X			
Limited control over priorities or workload	X	X		X	X			
Having too much or too little to do	X					X		
Poor relationships with co-workers or supervisors	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Bullying, harassment, and violence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unclear work role and expectations	X			X				
Worker continually subjected to deadlines	X			X				
Roles that require regular overtime	X		X	X				
Meaningless or monotonous work	X	X						
Career stagnation		X						
Inadequate or lack of supervision		X	X					
Lack of resources, information, or tools/equipment to perform the work			X					
Roles that require regular overtime			X			X		
Lack of diversity and inclusion			X			X		
High uncertainty and job insecurity			X	X				X
Roles that involve dealing with difficult people/clients				X	X			X
Tasks that require emotions to be hidden				X		X		
Social or physical isolation					X			
Roles that are exposed to emotionally disturbing events						X		
Workers not consulted about decisions impacting them							X	X
Lack of justice and fairness						X		X
Psychosocial Hazards (Examples) \ Industries	Retail	Manu- facturing	Construction	Services	Transport. /Logistics	Health care	Education	Government

The [New Zealand Psychosocial Survey](#) has been one of the first steps from WorkSafe to better understand psychosocial health in New Zealand workplaces and to ensure the risk factors are part of the occupational health monitoring system. These results are a baseline to address psychosocial hazards and promote better practices in the workplace. Some of the outcomes in the latest Survey in 2021 are:

- **35% of workers** reported being exposed to at least **one offensive behaviour** in the last 12 months.
- **Bullying is the most common hostile act** reported by 23% of the surveyed workers.
- **The speed and intensity of work**, the need to **conceal feelings from other people at work**, and **workload** are the most common sources of psychosocial risk for workers.
- **Māori and Pacific workers** reported higher levels of **insecurity over their working conditions and threats to professional identity**.

Identifying key sources of psychosocial hazards provides valuable insights to track risk exposure over time and target interventions to promote mental well-being in all workplaces.

How can you spot psychosocial hazards at work?

Identifying hazards, their risks, and ways to control them, should be done in consultation with workers.

01

Hazard Identification

Here are some things to look for that can shed light on identifying hazards in your workplace. You can gather information by analysing workplace data and reports available, observing the dynamics in the areas of the business and having one-to-one conversations with employees.

Analyse Sick Leave Patterns:

- Identify areas or roles with higher sick leave rates compared to others.
- Look for trends in sick leave reasons such as headaches, recurrent colds and flu, musculoskeletal disorders, and fatigue.

Assess Workload and Staffing:

- Verify if any work areas are consistently understaffed or if there's high employee rotation.
- Look for trends indicating workload issues or common incidents reported by employees.

Review Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Data:

- Analyse EAP usage patterns and see what kind of help workers are asking for.
- Look for any recurring topics that may indicate workplace hazards.

Examine Meeting Minutes and Records:

- Review minutes of meetings for unresolved issues related to workload, role changes, or other concerns.
- Analyse work schedule records, timesheets, and other relevant documentation for insights into work patterns and extra hours.

Evaluate Policy Compliance:

- Assess the existence and compliance of policies and procedures related to psychological hazards and mental health, such as harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

Utilize Employee Surveys:

- Conduct employee surveys or other tools to measure overall employee sentiment and identify potential stressors or concerns. If this is already in place check the results and look for potential hazards.

Observe Behavioural Signs:

- Watch for signs of stress or tension among employees, such as openly criticising others or expressing frustration with the work environment.
- Observe workers for signs of illness or discomfort while at work.

Encourage Open Communication:

- Pay attention to how workers interact with each other and discuss work-related issues.
- Look for signs of strained communication, such as the use of blame language or personal criticism.



02 Risk Assessment

Once hazards are identified, the next step is to **assess the potential consequences or outcomes** if those hazards were to affect employees directly or indirectly. This risk assessment helps prioritise actions to control and mitigate workplace risks effectively.

Control Implementation

After identifying potential risks, it's crucial to prioritize them and focus on implementing controls for those that pose the biggest impact on your business.

These controls should aim to prevent harm to your employees.

Click the link below to access a template and an example to help you evaluate and assign controls to the identified risk factors.

03

04 Control Effectiveness Assessment

It's vital to regularly check if the risk control measures are effective as intended. You can do this by assigning a success metric to each implemented control measure.

[Download Templates Here](#)

Empowering Actions for Employee Well-being

Preventing psychosocial risks in the workplace requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both organisational and individual factors.

The Government Health and Safety Lead released in 2021, a document titled **'Creating mentally healthy work and workplaces'** outlining actions to enhance worker well-being. These actions are categorised into three main groups:

Preventative

Primary Interventions: Take proactive steps to address workplace factors at their source to prevent ongoing issues and protect employee mental health from harm.

Secondary Interventions: These initiatives aim to empower employees to tackle challenges, whether they approach them proactively or reactively.

Training & education: Resilience Training, mental health education and promotion.

Reactive

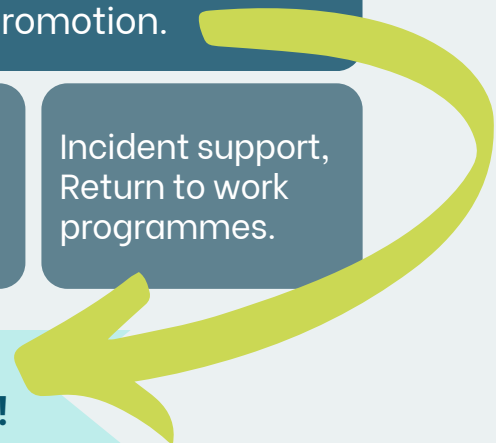
Tertiary Interventions: Offer tailored support to employees with mental health challenges.

Employee Assistance Programmes.

Incident support, Return to work programmes.



Life Care can provide Resilience and Mental Health Training for your staff!



Empowering staff to handle mental challenges is a fundamental step towards **addressing psychosocial risks** in the workplace and fostering a healthy and productive work environment. At Life Care, we understand the significance of mental health training for both workers and leaders. Our seminars are designed to have a significant **impact on people's well-being** and, ultimately, productivity. We offer three types of seminars tailored to help you effectively control and mitigate mental risks in your business.

For more information, don't hesitate to reach out to our team at info@lifecare.co.nz.

Mental Health Training

Building resilient, healthy workforces.

Life Care's team of experts provides engaging, realistic, and scenario-based mental health training that empowers employees to live and work to their highest potential.



Building Resilience & Self-care

Self-awareness is an important exercise in recognising how we are feeling physically, emotionally, and psychologically. This practical course teaches the symptoms of chronic stress, how to recognise early warning signs and explore the ways to mitigate the risk of a health event. [Learn More.](#)

On-site Course: Minimum number of 10 maximum 20 pax
Duration: 4 Hours



Mental Health 101

Equip your team with the confidence to identify the signs of someone who may be struggling with mental health and proactively engage with them. [Learn More.](#)

On-site Course: Minimum number of 10 maximum 20 pax
Duration: 4 Hours



Introduction to Mental Health

Increase awareness and understanding of mental illness and learn the importance of self-care. A great addition to new employee induction programmes. [Learn More.](#)

On-site Seminar: Up to 25 attendees
Online Seminar: Unlimited users
Duration: 1 Hour



Sources:

[Position statement: 'Supporting Mentally Healthy Work](#)

[WorkSafe - Psychosocial hazards in work environments and effective approaches for managing them](#)

[WorkSafe - New Zealand Psychosocial Survey](#)

[WorkSafe - Psychosocial Factors](#)

[WorkSafe - Mentally Healthy Work](#)

[Health and Safety NZ - Creating mentally healthy work and workplaces](#)

[Health and Safety NZ - Mentally healthy work](#)

[Umbrella - Psychosocial risk management and governance responsibilities](#)

[Employment Hero - Understanding psychosocial hazards](#)

