

Keeping the Workplace Psychosocially Safe for the National Safe Work Month

October is National Safe Work Month, a time to “commit to building a safe and healthy workplace”, but what does a “safe and healthy workplace” actually mean?

Being safe and healthy doesn't just constitute being free from physical harm, it also means being psychologically safe. Under the model WHS laws, an employer must manage their psychosocial risks in the workplace. This means employers need to take action to ensure workers feel safe from factors that may impact their health and safety at work.

These include:

- job demands
- low job control
- poor support
- lack of role clarity
- poor organisational change management
- inadequate reward and recognition
- poor organisational justice
- traumatic events or material
- remote or isolated work
- poor physical environment
- violence and aggression
- bullying
- harassment, including sexual harassment,
- conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions

It appears like a sizeable undertaking, but there are various ways a workplace can produce good psychosocial conditions, where mental and physical wellbeing is looked after and performance and personal development is enhanced.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIMITING PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK

Exposure to poor working situations can have an impact on employees' mental health, such as depression anxiety or burnout.

However, the damages caused by psychosocial risk factors don't solely concern the employees, as they can quickly spread throughout and organisation and affect financial performance and branding. This is because an employee experiencing mental health issues doesn't work as efficiently, is less engaged and less creative. Not only that, they're also more likely to suffer from physical illness and require more sick leave.



The Productivity Commission estimates that the Australian economy loses up to **\$60 billion annually** in health care, lost productivity, and many other direct and indirect costs. It's a cost that more and more businesses are starting to recognise, and an area we help our customers understand and manage.



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HOW TO PREVENT PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK FACTORS

1) Identify

Before implementing any solutions, organisations need to identify the psychosocial hazards potentially causing harm to workers. While most organisations do not set out to deliberately harm their employees, things like poor recruitment, lack of well defined work systems or inadequate support may lead to a culture where these types of hazards arise.

2) Target

Once you have identified the risks, it's important to understand which ones are more immediately harmful. Remember, not all risks are equal in terms of their severity and impact. Implementing regular psychosocial risk assessments can help employers understand which hazards require immediate intervention while setting up long-term strategies to manage them. Depending on what the hazards are, each may require a unique approach.

3) Plan ahead

While not all risks can be eliminated, it is crucial to have a plan in place to counter the adverse impacts of these hazards and take steps to manage or reduce the risk. Depending on the hazards, these risk controls can take several forms and may include job or process redesign, changes to recruitment practices, education and training, leadership development, recognition and reward practices, career progression opportunities, internal and external support mechanisms, amongst others.

4) Engage with employees

Consultation with employees and managers are key to both identifying and controlling hazards, while seeking external expertise and intervention where required. Organisations with strong safety cultures are built through engagement with their people, reporting hazards and contributing to the risk management process.

CONVERGE PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK PRODUCTS & SERVICES

1. Identify Hazards

Review workplace data, conduct observations and psychosocial risk survey

2. Assess Risks

Review existing controls measures, assess and prioritise risk according to severity and likelihood

3. Control Risks

Control measure recommendations prioritised based on assessed risk

4. Review Control Measures

In consultation, develop implementation, prevention and evaluation plan

We provide a report aligning with the WH&S legislation amendments, containing a risk register, implementation and prevention plan to demonstrate compliance.

OUR CULTURE & PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH AUDIT (CPHA)

At Converge, we have a holistic approach to measuring and improving the psychosocial health and wellbeing in the workplace. Our Culture Psychosocial Health Assessment and Audit Tool (CPHA) is a systematic and cultural assessment that is designed to prevent psychological harm, enhance early intervention efforts and support recovery.



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CPHA not only aligns with the Psychological Health and Safety At Work and Safe Work Australia's national guidance (the industry standard), but also assesses an organisation's current level of psychosocial health and wellbeing maturity using a two-pronged, 360-degree approach.

OUR PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Our psychosocial risk management training is designed to enhance organisation, leader and employee capability to identify and manage psychosocial risks within their workplace. This includes designing the training for those who will be organising or conducting risk assessments within the organisation (Health and Safety professionals, Human Resources), those who will implement or support the risk assessment process (leadership, supervisors, Health and Safety Representatives) and those who will be consulted or contribute to the risk assessment (employees, contractors).



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