



Managing Psychological Hazards at Work

Last Reviewed:	October 2021
Next Review Date:	October 2026
Division/Department:	Corporate Performance
Responsible Officer:	Manager PS&P
HPE CM Record Number:	21/200924

1 Associated Policy

Work Health and Safety Policy

2 Application

To provide staff with the self-awareness and skill set to recognize potential psychological hazards in the workplace and strategies to competently deal with these. This procedure strongly supports Councils Wellness initiatives nurturing a strong, robust and resilient workplace culture.

Purpose

To meet Council's legislative duties and support workers in achieving a safe and harmonious work environment that fosters personal growth and self-fulfilment underpinning corporate values and staff aspirations.

Scope

Work demands can trigger a stress response which if mild and temporary can increase motivation to perform. However, if exposure is severe and/or frequent this can lead to hyper arousal and become harmful. Work related stress is recognized to be on a continuum from mild, temporary stress, to harmful, with the latter increasing the risk of psychological injury, musculoskeletal injury, fatigue, workplace incidents/ accidents and chronic disease. This procedure documents Council's responses for identifying and managing the potential risks of psychological injury in the workplace.

Overview

To promote awareness and understanding of physiological hazards in the workplace.

3 Definitions

Term	Meaning
Stress	The feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure
Psychological	Related to the mental and emotional state of a person
Cumulative Stress	Increasing in quantity, degree, or force by successive additions

4 Relevant Legislation

WHS Act.

- Part 2 Section 17 Management of risks
- Part 2 Section 19 Primary duty of care
- Part 2 Section 27 Duty of officers
- Part 2 Section 28 Duties of workers
- Part 2 Section 29 Duties of other persons at the workplace

WHS Regulation.

- Chapter 3 Part 3.1 Clause 34 Duty to identify hazards
- Chapter 3 Part 3.1 Clause 35 Managing risks to health and safety
- Chapter 3 Part 3.1 Clause 36 Hierarchy of controls
- Chapter 3 Part 3.1 Clause 37 Maintenance of control measures
- Chapter 3 Part 3.1 Clause 38 Review of control measures

5 Procedure

5.1 Identify Physiological Hazards.

Council understands that everyone is different and that the degree of potential impact of psychological hazards is unique to the individual. Council further understands that while work may contribute to an individual’s cumulative stress profile it is but one component part of the individuals overall experiences. Given the above Council will identify those workplaces, work activities and work relationship hazards that could potentially contribute to psychological injury.

Council will review the various elements that could contribute to workplace psychological stresses and their various manifestations including;

- The nature and type of work undertaken by Council
- Council’s operating environment and pressures
- Emergency situations and chronic disrupters such as Covid-19
- Workers interactions
- Management of change
- Work scheduling
- Organizational culture
- Governance

In most cases, there will be multiple sources of risk to psychological health. Most stress and workplace incidents occur as a result of a chain of events. If one or more of these events can be stopped or changed, then the risks may be effectively minimized or even eliminated.

In helping determine physiological risks a review of other indicators will be referenced including;

- systems, policies and procedures
- staff skill profiles and experience
- absenteeism, turnover, exit interviews and sick leave data
- staff complaints
- workers’ compensation claims for psychological harm and occupational violence
- work-related psychological incidents – Incident Reports
- previous psychological reports
- culture surveys
- advice provided by the Regulator

Consultation:

This process will be in accordance with WHS&IM system procedure [Consultation and Communication](#)

5.2 Assessing the Risks

Council will undertake a psychological risk assessment which will include consideration of;

- the sources and processes causing the risks
- the regularity and duration of activities potentially exposing workers to risk
- identify which workers are at the highest risk of harm
- decide how severe the psychological risk is
- decide if existing control measures are effective
- choose additional control measures as available/required
- decide how urgently action needs to be taken
- consider the impact of emergency situations

5.3 Controlling the Risks

Based on the outcomes of the psychological risk assessment Council will;

- Implement controls as listed.
- Include as a hazard in relevant Work instructions
- Undertake a staff wellness survey
- Implement a corporate Wellness program
- Provide an independent and confidential Employee Assistance program that is accessible 24/7
- Train nominated staff in mental health first aid
- Train and upskill workers to better understand how to identify and deal with the risks posed by psychological injuries.
- Include wellness strategies in training including inductions and system training
- Audit against this procedure to ensure understanding and application

Wellness

Council has implement a Corporate Wellness programme that collectively supports and engenders good mental health reducing the risks of psychological injury see [Health & Wellbeing Procedure](#) This program will drive continuous improvement in the area of mental health through a process of inclusion, building resilience and better understanding and controlling the risks associated with poor mental health. Tri- annually a review will be undertaken to determine the health of the organisation and included in the WHS&IM Review and Planning Report

5.4 Monitoring and Review.

Council will include this procedure as part of its audit schedules and will monitor the Incident Reporting System on an ongoing basis to identify psychological injury reports.

All Incident Reports involving mental health will initiate a Level 2 investigation. All safety related matters including those relating to psychological injury are reported quarterly to the ELT and Bi-monthly to the WHS Committee.

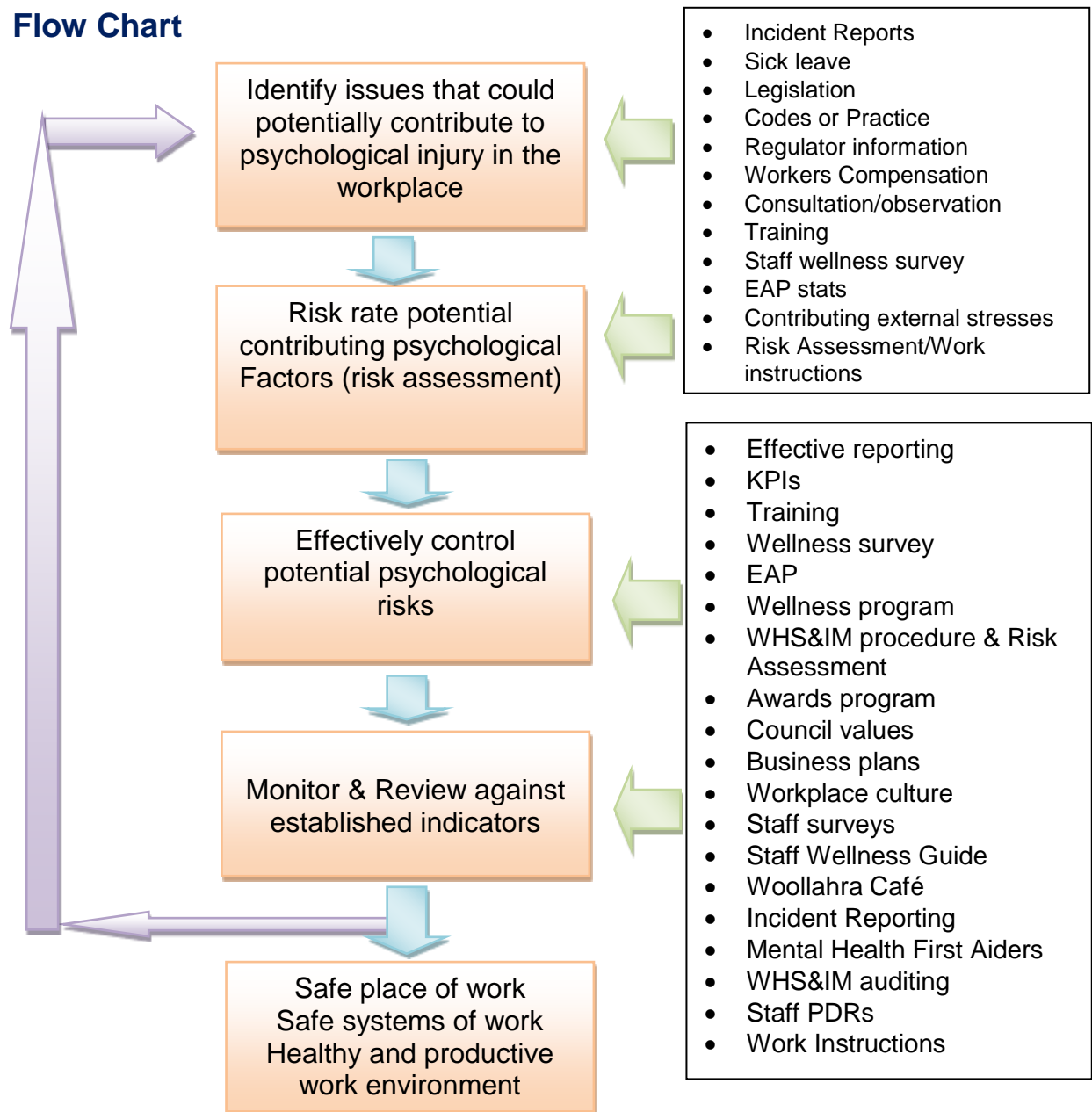
Triggers for review of psychological injury will include;

- where a new hazard or risk is identified
- if the situation changes
- if a control measure is not adequately minimizing the risk
- before a significant workplace change occurs i.e. work environment or systems
- where consultation indicates a review is necessary
- if requested by the WHS Committee
- at agreed review dates
- as part of Councils Incident Reporting processes

Document Owner Director Corporate Performance	Revision # 5	Date Reviewed 10/2021	Date of Next Review 10/2026
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Training relating to mental health including psychological injury is reviewed after each session with improvements incorporated when identified.

6 Flow Chart



7 Documentation/References

	HPECM Reference
SafeWork Australia Guide “Preventing workplace violence and Aggression”.	SafeWork Australia
SafeWork NSW Code Of Practice “Managing Psychological Hazards at Work	SafeWork NSW

8 Related Policies and Procedures

	HPECM Reference
Work Health and Safety Policy	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure - Management Responsibilities	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure - Consultation and Communication	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure - Corrective Actions	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM Policy – Employee Assistance Program Policy	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Fatigue Management	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Hazardous Manual Tasks and Ergonomics	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Health & Wellbeing Procedure	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Incident Reporting and hazard identification	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Inductions	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Risk Management	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Training	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Work Instructions & SOP	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Management Review	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – WHS&IM Reporting	See WHS section of The hub
WHS&IM procedure – Injury Management & RTW Procedure	See WHS section of The hub

Procedure Amendments

Date	Responsible Officer	Description
October 2021	Manager PS&P	New procedure approved by WHS Committee October 2021
May 2022	HS&IM Coordinator	Updated with additional legislative references and other minor updates.
July 2022	HS&IM Coordinator	Added doc control and updated to new structure
Sept 2023	HS&IM Coordinator	Updated WHS Policy name
Sept 2023	HS&IM Coordinator	Hyperlinked documents and a couple of minor changes not affecting process.