

TIP SHEET 10

Recognition and reward – minimising work-related stress

Rewarding workers' efforts and recognising their organisational contributions and achievements as individuals and teams, are essential to minimising the risk of work-related stress.

Possible solutions

Decisions need to be made about what practical solutions (control measures) will be used in the workplace to prevent, eliminate or minimise the effect of work-related stressors on worker health.

At the organisational level, controls target the work itself and focus on job design, work environment and working conditions.

For the risk factor 'low recognition and reward', organisational level solutions should address feedback on task performance, performance reviews, skill development and formal and informal rewards.

Worker recognition and reward are powerful tools in any workplace. They are ongoing ways of showing appreciation and affirming the positive efforts of workers. Thanking workers motivates them and encourages more of the same actions that make a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) successful. Workers who feel appreciated are more positive about themselves and their ability to contribute.

Ways to recognise and reward workers may include:

Feedback on task performance

- Listen to workers' needs, concerns and ideas and be responsive to them as a meaningful form of recognition.
- Provide regular feedback on task performance. Praise workers whenever tasks have been done well and be specific about what was done well so that it may be repeated.

- Recognise and reward workers for their ingenuity or effort, not just for their contribution or productivity.
- Formally or informally congratulate workers/team members on a job well done by:
 - celebrating successes through team lunches or morning teas
 - recognising individuals in team meetings
 - conducting staff awards programs
 - writing an article in an internal publication
 - advising a supervisor if a peer performs well
 - communicating the good news up the chain.
- Recognise and celebrate individual and team successes promptly.

Performance reviews

- Use performance reviews as an opportunity for constructive communication around work.
- Use performance reviews as a time to provide positive and constructive advice for future performance, including opportunities for skill development. A general rule is to give two-thirds of positive feedback and one-third of constructive or developmental feedback.
- Where possible, avoid linking performance reviews with discussions about pay as this may distract from the process.

Opportunities for development

- Ensure rewards are meaningful and are tailored to suit the worker and/or work group. For example if possible provide:
 - additional incentives (linked to work performance and achievements)
 - access to company workshops and training programs beyond those that are necessary for workers to undertake their roles
 - opportunities to participate in ongoing personal and professional development through continued learning outside of the work environment.
- Provide workers opportunities for career development such as acting in higher level roles during a superior's absence.
- Consider rotating jobs or using coaching/mentoring to enrich workers' interest and motivation and enable them to broaden their skill set.

Tangible rewards

- Emphasise work as its own reward to avoid complacency and the notion that work should only be done well if there is an additional reward at the end of it.
- Use rewards to acknowledge good performance and not as a way to control a worker's behaviour. Consider rewards as an expression of appreciation and a way of recognising individual or group contribution to a job responsibility, task or an organisational goal.
- Determine the objective of a reward (for example to recognise a worker's value or to provide encouragement) before deciding on what the reward should be.
- If used, a financial reward should reflect the level of effort applied. Ensure the system is fair and equitable for all workers and that the rewards may be achieved with realistic effort.
- Rewards may be:
 - informal (for example simple comments such as 'thank you' or 'great work' or assignment to a special project)
 - formal (for example prizes, commissions, bonuses, gift certificates, or share options).
- Unexpected financial rewards may be a way to convey appreciation for a task well done. However, avoid using them on a frequent basis as they do little to establish a culture of appreciation and it may become an expected entitlement.

Rewards program

- When using an incentives-based scheme, ensure the objectives and intent of the program are clear to all workers. Keep decision criteria for rewards simple and ensure that rewards under the scheme are achievable.
- If appropriate, implement a rewards program that provides positive reinforcement for contributions, which align with the organisation's overall goals.
- Research or consult about the type of rewards that workers would find meaningful and relevant.
- Ensure the program is communicated to the entire organisation and that all workers have an opportunity to benefit from the program, not just the top performers.
- Develop a formal training program for managers about the rewards program and its rationale.

Group rewards

- Recognise and reward workers for individual, as well as team accomplishments.
- Give group rewards based on the performance of a team or unit rather than any one individual. This can be achieved by linking rewards to the performance of a group as a whole and will both enhance teamwork and avoid potential conflict between workers.
- Provide rewards that reinforce teamwork, for example a team dinner or a team trip, and ensure the reward is equitable and accessible to all team members who contributed to the project or task.
- Consider different reward systems for different teams – in an organisation of diverse teams, a one-size-fits-all approach may not be the best solution.
- Be mindful of rewarding workers for individual accomplishments as well as accomplishments as a member of a team. Each member of the team still needs and expects to be individually recognised and rewarded for their contribution to team goals.

At the individual level, solutions are aimed at assisting individuals to cope or build resilience.

Appropriate activities and assistance to be considered at this level of intervention include:

- corporate induction programs
- access to employee assistance programs
- training about resilience
- health and wellbeing programs
- counselling/therapy for people experiencing distress from sources both in and outside of the workplace.

This tip sheet is one of 12 that refer to work-related stress. For more detail, go to workcover.nsw.gov.au

1. Overview of work-related stress
2. A risk management approach to work-related stress
3. Implementing a work-related stress risk management process
4. Risk factors for work-related stress
5. Work demands and work-related stress
6. Levels of control and work-related stress
7. Support from supervisors and/or co-workers regarding work-related stress
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11. Managing change and work-related stress
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This document was developed by Workplace Health & Safety QLD, Department of Justice and Attorney General worksafe.qld.gov.au

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