

Psychosocial hazards



A psychosocial hazard is anything that can cause psychological harm to a person in the workplace. Identifying any psychosocial hazards is an important step towards creating a mentally well workplace.

Psychosocial hazards can include:

- Job demands
- Low job control
- Poor support
- Lack of role clarity
- Poor organisational change management
- Inadequate reward or recognition
- Poor organisational justice
- Experiencing a traumatic event
- Remote or isolated work
- Poor physical working environment
- Violence, aggression or conflict
- Bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment
- Poor workplace relationships and interactions

When a person experiences a psychosocial hazard, it can lead to psychological or physical harm. While there are different ways to identify psychosocial hazards in the workplace, what we can do is listen out for signs of hazards. Keep in mind that employees may speak about or describe psychosocial hazards in different ways.

I'm afraid what the reaction will be

I felt humiliated

I haven't been able to sleep, I'm thinking about it all the time

I don't think I can speak up

I feel stressed/burnt out/unable to cope

This is a toxic workplace

I'm not really sure what I'm meant to be doing

Why can't they let me do my job?

I can't get this done

Managing psychosocial hazards



Safe Work Australia recommends following the same four step risk management process you use to manage physical hazards to manage psychosocial hazards.

Effective risk management is a four-step process: identify, assess, control and review.



1 IDENTIFY

Identify any psychosocial hazards or risks in the workplace by talking to employees, watching how employees interact, inspecting your workplace or using staff surveys to gather feedback.

2 ASSESS

Think about the consequences that could occur if workers are exposed to the hazards and risks you identified. Many hazards and their associated risks are well-known, but some may need to be identified through a formal assessment process.

3 CONTROL

Wherever possible, eliminate the risk or hazard. If the risk cannot be eliminated, aim to minimise it as much as possible. This will take careful planning.

4 REVIEW

Regularly monitoring and reviewing your progress is important. When you review your risk control measures, you ensure they remain effective.