



FAST FACT, REF FF:015:02

HSE NATIONAL POLICY ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF WORK-RELATED STRESS 2023

FAST FACTS provide a brief overview of various health and safety topics to support our managers, employees, safety representatives and others. Why not bring this to your Safety Committees/Departmental Meeting for discussion? Additional information is available by visiting our website at: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/>

This FAST FACT provides a brief overview of the **HSE National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Work-Related Stress 2023**. The policy can be downloaded [here](#).

DID YOU KNOW THAT

The HSE (UK) Management Standards for Work-Related Stress (WRS) identifies six areas of work (stressors) that can have a negative impact on employee health. The six Management Standards include:

- **Demands:** includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control:** how much say does the person have over the way they do their work?
- **Support:** includes encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships:** includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior.
- **Role:** do people understand their role within the organisation? Does the organisation ensure the person does not have conflicting roles?
- **Change:** how is organisational change (large or small) managed and communicated?

DEFINITION(S) (AS PER POLICY)

- 'Work-related stress can be defined as stress caused or made worse by work. It simply refers to when a person perceives the work environment in such a way that his or her reaction involves feelings of an inability to cope. It may be caused by perceived/real pressures/deadlines/threats/anxieties within the working environment.'

POLICY STATEMENT

- It is the policy of the Health Service Executive (HSE) to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable the protection of employees from the potential risks related to work-related stress.
- The human and organisational cost of stress from ill-health, absences from work and lower productivity can be significantly reduced by working together to address both the causes and consequences of work-related stress. This starts with **promoting awareness** of situations that may cause work-related stress and finding ways to address these in a timely manner. It also involves **creating supportive workplaces** which facilitates staff who experience stress to be involved in remedying it through reporting it. Corporate Management, Senior Managers, Line Managers and Employees each have a responsibility to contribute to this and to take steps to deal with issues identified.

PURPOSE

- The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness and understanding of work-related stress, and to support managers and employees on how to prevent, identify and manage work related stress, with a focus on hazard identification and risk assessment.
- This policy is concerned with negative stress and the related risk factors. Most forms of stress are caused by stressors that gradually push people beyond their capacity to cope comfortably. However, single events can sometimes set off intense and complex stress reactions. These are generally referred to as **critical incidents** and are outside the scope of this Policy. Refer to: [HSE Policy for Preventing and Managing Critical Incident Stress](#).

SCOPE

- This policy applies to all HSE employees, fixed term employees and temporary employees. The Policy supersedes the HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Stress in the Workplace 2018.
- Section 38 and Section 39 agencies are to adopt this Policy or develop a Policy of their own which is consistent with this Policy.



KEY HEALTH AND LEGISLATION

- [Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005](#)
- [Safety Health and Welfare at Work \(General Application\) Regulations, 2007](#)

INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION & TRAINING

- The HSE eLearning programme '**Preventing and Managing Work-Related Stress (WRS) A Guide for Managers**' supports Managers who have the responsibility to manage staff and carry out OSH risk assessments for their area of responsibility.

MANAGER'S KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure risk assessments (to include the identification of potential stressors in the workplace i.e. demands of the job, control, support, relationships, role, change management) for their area of responsibility are completed proactively and where necessary reactively and reviewed in consultation with employees and appropriate measures to eliminate, minimise or control the risks implemented.
- Recognise signs of stress in yourself and in others and encourage employees to report stressors and or symptoms of stress.
- Be aware of the role of the Occupational Health Service.
- To be aware of the range of employee support services available and advise employees of the services/supports available to them.
- Support appropriate stress management interventions/training to address identified stressors build team/individual resilience and coping mechanisms.

EMPLOYEE'S KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Adhere to and apply this Policy, local procedures and safe systems of work and any associated risk assessments and risk controls.
- Report work practices and events that cause undue or unnecessary stress to your manager to allow for early intervention.
- Take responsibility for minimising risk to self and for seeking out self-help resources through Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health and online resources to help manage work related stress.

Detailed Roles and Responsibilities are detailed in the HSE National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Work-Related Stress 2023.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Risk Assessment should be carried out as follows:

- **Proactively (Prevention) at Level 1** to work with an individual employee or collaboratively with a group/team/service to identify work-related stress hazards, conduct a risk assessment and implement controls to reduce employee(s) exposure to workplace stressors.
- **Reactively (Mitigation) at Level 2** to work with an individual employee who is exhibiting signs of stress or is seeking support, or to work collaboratively with the group/team/service where there is information to suggest that they may be experiencing work-related stress.

To undertake a risk assessment, it is important to understand what in the workplace could cause/potentially could cause harm to employees. The risk assessment process comprises of the following **FOUR STEPS** which are detailed in Section 2.0, Part A of the Policy:

Step 1 - Identify the Hazard (Consider the six Management Standards - Demands, Control, Support, Role, Change and Relationships).

Step 2 - Identify the Risks associated with the hazard

Step 3 - Assess and rate the Risk

Step 4 - Identify any additional control measures

The Work-Related Stress Risk Assessment form CF:013 and work examples for individual and team can be downloaded [here](#).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- [Health and Safety Authority - Work Related Stress A Guide for Employers](#)
- [Health and Safety Authority - Work Related Stress Information Sheet for Employees](#)

Work-related Stress Risk Assessment Form – Part 2 of 3		
Was there a specific issue/incident that triggered this risk assessment?		
Potential work related stressors	Employee's concerns	Existing controls/What is happening now?
Demands		
What is causing you to feel under excessive pressure at work?		
Are you clear on service priorities?		
How do you prioritise your daily work duties?		
Are you clear on work deadlines and are they realistic?		
Do you feel you have the right skills & knowledge to do your job?		
Have you concerns with your physical work environment e.g. light, temperature, space etc.		
Do you find your work emotionally demanding?		
Do you find your work boring or repetitive?		
Control		
Are you clear about who does what in your service area?		
Do you have opportunities to develop your skills/ use your initiative?		
Have you any flexibility in when you take your break/Annual Leave?		
How do you find the pace of your work?		
Support		
Is there good communication in your service area? e.g. one-to-one meeting with manager/ team meeting?		
Are your work colleagues supportive?		
Do I, as your manager, give you enough guidance & support?		
Have you the resources you need to do your job?		
Do you require further training / skills development?		
Are there pressures outside work that are affecting you at work?		
Would you like the support to deal with these pressures?		
Are you aware of HSE employee supports available?		
Do you need information on how to access HSE supports?		