

Stress Management Policy

A) POLICY ON MANAGING STRESS

- 1) We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing the causes of stress in the workplace.
- 2) This policy applies to everyone employed by the Company. Employees are responsible for their own health and safety as well as that of their colleagues. Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy and the Company is responsible for providing the necessary resources to ensure its effective implementation.

B) DEFINITION OF STRESS

- 1) The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. The definition helps to distinguish between pressure, which can be positive and motivational if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.
- 2) The following policy and procedures outline the responsibilities of the Company, Managers and staff in ensuring that excessive pressures are minimised, and in the event that an adverse reaction arises, that work related stress is managed effectively.

C) RESPONSIBILITIES

1) The Company

- a) We acknowledge our duty of care to all our employees, to provide a safe working environment as well as safe systems of work.
- b) We also acknowledge the importance of the health and safety of our employees in complying with relevant legislation.
- c) We will provide guidance to managers and raise awareness of stress, its effects and how to manage it.
- d) We will support managers in implementing recommendations arising from stress risk assessments.
- e) We will work with, and support, managers and individuals to find the best way to manage work related stress.
- f) We will provide the opportunity for employees to attend occupational health counsellors, where appropriate.
- g) We will aim to deal with and resolve instances of excessive pressure to avoid sickness absence occurring.

2) Managers

- a) Conduct formal, recorded assessments of stress as part of the legal obligation to conduct general risk assessments.
- b) Implement the recommendations arising out of those risk assessments.
- c) Review risk assessments at least annually and following any changes in methods of work which may affect the likelihood of stress occurring.
- d) Monitor sickness absence to ensure any trends that are stress related are identified and investigated.
- e) Ensure effective communication between management and staff, in particular at times of organisational or procedural change.
- f) Ensure that staff are fully trained to undertake the duties required of them.
- g) Ensure that opportunities for development are available to staff.

- h) Monitor workloads, to ensure that employees are able to undertake the agreed targets.
- i) Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not working excessive hours.
- j) Monitor holidays to ensure that employees take their full leave entitlement.
- k) Attend training as requested and be familiar with good management practice relating to health and safety in the workplace.
- l) Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their team.
- m) Be able to offer additional support to members of staff who are experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.

3) **Employees**

- a) Employees have a legal obligation to take care of themselves and their colleagues whilst at work. This includes advising management of any circumstance that may cause or increase stress.
- b) Employees must raise issues of concern with their line manager or a senior person in the organisation if it is not appropriate to raise them with the line manager.
- c) Employees must communicate if they are feeling under pressure or are unable to cope with the demands being placed on them.
- d) Take responsibility for managing their own workload and duties expected.
- e) Identify what will help to reduce or manage excessive pressures.
- f) Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

D) PROCEDURE

Stress may manifest itself in physiological or behavioural ways:

Physiological characteristics may include:

Sleeplessness, sudden headaches, breathlessness, ulcers, increased consumption (food, alcohol and cigarettes), lack of concentration, difficulty remembering things, careless mistakes, slow work, over-emotional behaviour, fatigue or depression.

Behavioural characteristics may include:

confusion and uncertainty, lack of confidence / seeking reassurance, inability to make decisions, mood swings, low motivation, increased sickness absence.

There are some types of personality where symptoms will not be displayed and managers should be extremely vigilant in these cases.

The responsibilities outlined above form the basis of the procedure, and attempt to identify and manage stress before absence from work occurs. In the event that an employee is absent from work due to stress, the following procedure should be followed:

- a) Usual sickness absence and reporting procedures apply;
- b) On receipt of a medical certificate stating "stress" obtain, using the access to medical reports procedure, a specialist medical opinion on the condition;
- c) At the earliest possible opportunity, the manager must meet the employee to discuss the cause/s of stress (taking account of any medical opinion and recommendations) and what remedial action could be taken.
- d) Return to work interviews must take place in all cases;
- e) If the cause is related to the employee's personal life, the manager must be supportive and sympathetic as far as is reasonably practicable;

- f) If the cause is work related, it should be identified using the approach recommended by the HSE which is to look at the following areas:
- organisational culture;
 - demands on the individual;
 - the control the individual has on how the work is carried out;
 - relationships;
 - change;
 - job role;
 - support, training.
- g) The manager must continue to monitor the employee's workload, hours, performance and behaviour;
- h) The employee must keep the manager informed of their state of health.
- i) At all stages of this procedure it is important to carefully consider the need for medical advice to ensure all the medical facts relevant to the situation can be obtained and acted upon as necessary.

In the event that a reduction in working hours or a job of lesser responsibility or status is agreed, it is likely that a reduction in salary in line with the new hours / role will be agreed.

Due to the individual nature of the causes of stress and subsequent symptoms, each case will be treated on an individual basis.