



DEALING WITH STRESS – Policy & Procedure

PURPOSE

The Company aims to protect the health and welfare of our employees. Stress in our places of work can become a health problem. Our policy is to identify and reduce harmful stress wherever possible.

This policy applies to everyone in the Company. Managers and Directors are responsible for its implementation. It is also the responsibility of each of you to seek help as soon as possible if you feel unwell and think that this may be related to stress.

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 Stress

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

2. POLICY

The objectives of this policy are:-

- To prevent as far as we can stress in employees that may be a result of work practices, excessive workloads or interpersonal relationships within the workplace
- To take steps, where work-related stress does occur, to lessen the impact of this stress
- To provide training and support to help managers and employees understand and recognise the nature, causes and management of work-related stress; and, for managers in particular, how to prevent or lessen work-related stress
- To promote an approach to health and safety so that we build a culture of trust, co-operation and mutual respect within which all staff treat each other with dignity
- To develop a culture that is supportive and non judgmental of people with physical and mental health problems.

3. SOURCES OF STRESS

Some pressures at work are inevitable. It is very difficult to find a ‘pressure-free’ job. Every job brings its own set of tasks, responsibility and day-to-day problems, and the pressures and demands these place on us are an unavoidable part of working life. Some pressures can, in fact, be a good thing. It is often the tasks and challenges we face at work that provide structure to our working days, keep us motivated and are the key to a sense of achievement and job satisfaction.



But our ability to deal with pressure is not limitless. Excessive workplace pressure and the stress to which it can lead can be harmful. They can damage or harm both the health of our employees and the performance of our organisation.

Eliminating pressure from work is impossible but controlling harmful and unnecessary levels of stress will help keep you fit and healthy and improve organisational performance. Stress is of concern to The Company and it needs to be managed and controlled.

Stress may arise from various sources, including the workplace or life away from work.

Whilst The Company has no control over the latter, it is committed to identifying the sources of stress in the workplace and trying to eliminate them. There is no simple way of predicting what will cause harmful levels of stress. The levels of stress that are harmful differ for each individual according to their personality, experience, motivation and importantly the support they receive from managers, colleagues, family and friends. Our ability to cope with high levels of stress will also be determined by the amount being experienced outside of work, resulting from such situations as bereavement, family sickness and marital, financial or other personal problems.

Harmful stress is more likely to occur when there is / are:-

- Pressures which are cumulative and / or prolonged
- Demands placed upon the individual over which they feel they have lost control
- Lack of competence and / or training
- Demands which are conflicting – causing confusion
- High levels of uncertainty about work, objectives or job and career prospects
- Inflexible and / or over demanding or too simplistic work schedules
- Prolonged conflict between individuals, including possibly sexual or racial harassment, or bullying, or where staff are treated with contempt or indifference
- Absence of leadership, support and / or understanding from managers

These factors can combine with others (such as health problems and home pressures) and lead to the reduction in the ability to cope with pressures at work. Physical conditions such as noise, heat, humidity, poor ventilation, lighting or equipment, overcrowding, bad ergonomic design or other hazards might also increase stress levels.

4. EFFECTS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Stress does not have one defining symptom. The effects of stress may be physical, psychological, behavioural or a combination of these. Many effects are short term responses to pressure which disappear once the source of pressure has been removed. Sustained excessive pressure, however, can result in anxiety, anger and frustration, irritability, intolerance and over indulgence in alcohol, tobacco or drugs.

Physically stress may show itself by sleep disturbance resulting in tiredness, tenseness, nausea and dizziness, headaches, weight loss / gain and in extreme circumstances, by chest pains, raised blood pressure and heart disease. Mentally it may show itself by indecision, lack of concentration, memory loss, irritability, mood swings, poor judgement, loss of motivation and impairment of perception.



5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1. Responsibility for the effective management of stress rests at all levels of the organisation:
 - It is the duty of The Company and our directors and managers to ensure that staff work in a safe and healthy environment
 - It is your responsibility to seek assistance as early as possible if you show symptoms of stress
- 5.2 The Company procedures will be used to identify workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments so that stress or the risks from stress can be controlled. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- 5.3 The Company will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- 5.4 Directors / managers will ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- 5.5 Directors / managers will monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- 5.6 Directors / managers will ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their responsibility.
- 5.7 HR will give guidance to directors and managers on this policy
- 5.8 HR will help monitor the operation of this policy by collating absence statistics
- 5.9 HR will provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress
- 5.10 Employees will raise any concern with their line manager or with an HR Manager

6. MANAGING STRESS PROCEDURE

If you feel under stress, you should first discuss the problem with your immediate line manager. If this is not appropriate or possible, or if the problem is of a more delicate nature, you should contact the Director responsible for your area of your designated HR Manager. After discussion, the HR Manager will take appropriate action to address the matter; this will usually involve taking up the matter with your line manager on your behalf.

We do aim to take the causes of stress and have a number of policies aimed at preventing it at source. These include:-

- Open communication channels – good two-way communication is essential. The Company will continue to develop systems to ensure that staff members are kept informed and can make themselves heard
- Working Environments – regular inspection and monitoring of office health and safety arrangements is undertaken by the local Health & Safety Representative.



- An Occupational Health Scheme to support you if you have medical problems. In appropriate cases, we can refer you to Health Management Limited whose doctors are available to assist with diagnosis and rehabilitation.
- We may refer you to an external counselling service.
- Our Grievance Procedure can be used at any time.
- Our Harassment & Bullying Policy aims to prevent and tackle any instances of inappropriate behaviour at work.
- Probationary reviews and PDR's ensure that you are provided with the opportunity to meet with your line manager and discuss your role, work performance, development needs and any other relevant issues within a formal and supportive framework.

7. REHABILITATION

- Rehabilitation will generally be required following a period of sick leave caused by a stress-related illness.
- If stress at work caused or was part of the cause of ill health leading to the absence, managers should seek to make changes to eliminate or manage the source of stress.
- It is the responsibility of line managers to smooth the path for staff returning to work after a period of sickness and to avoid exposure to further risks. Staff suffering from stress-related illness should be treated with the same degree of care and all reasonably practicable steps should be taken to ensure a stress-free return to work. This may involve measures such as agreeing a phased return to work or arranging a period of part-time working. Managers should make every effort to welcome people back to work and to avoid any stigma.

Note- the information provided here is courtesy of Tenon and as such is only provided as an example.