

HUMAN RESOURCES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: STRESS

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South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue
WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: STRESS

INTRODUCTION

1. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all employees and recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue.
2. SYFR acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.
3. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership¹, SYFR is committed to promoting a positive working environment where the dignity and respect, to which all employees are entitled, is not undermined. No employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender or gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or spiritual belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, marital/parental status, family ties, trade union or political belief, hours worked, or any other reason, either directly or indirectly.
4. This policy applies to all employees of SYFR and should be read and used in conjunction with the associated documents listed below:
 - Confidentiality Policy
 - Counselling Procedure
 - Post Incident Support Procedure
 - Counselling Information Sheet
 - Dignity at Work Policy
 - Health and Safety Stress Reduction Guidance
 - Work Life Balance Policies

DEFINITION OF STRESS

5. All work puts some pressure on individuals; in general the more demanding the work the greater the pressure. This can lead to higher output and satisfaction with work, however a point of diminishing returns can also be reached whereby increasing the workload leads to reversed effects. These include lowered; efficiency, job satisfaction, performance and mental well-being. Stress itself is not an illness per se - it is a 'state' - however it is a very powerful cause of illness. Long term excessive stress is known to lead to serious health problems.

¹ The Dignity at Work Partnership is a partnership between the Government, Unite (the UK's largest union) and major public and private sector organisations. For further information on the Partnership, see www.dignityatwork.org

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6. The Health and Safety Executive define stress as; "The adverse reaction individuals have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them". This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly and stress that can be detrimental to health.

POLICY

7. SYFR will identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or to control the risks from stress. The risk assessments should be regularly reviewed by managers and/or Health and Safety.
8. Consultation with Trade Union Safety Representatives will take place on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
9. SYFR will provide training, where required, for managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
10. Confidential counselling will be provided for all employees affected either by work or external factors.

RESPONSIBILITIES

11. Managers will:
 - Conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction
 - Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes
 - Ensure that staff are fully trained to discharge their duties
 - Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities
 - Monitor work loads to ensure that people are not overloaded
 - Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not over working
 - Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement
 - Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety
 - Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction
 - Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

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12. Occupational Health and Safety Staff will:

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments
- Support individuals who are or have been off sick due to symptoms of stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work
- Provide support through the in house counselling service and where appropriate refer on to specialist agencies
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress
- Inform the employer and Trade Union Representatives of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

13. Human Resources will:

- Give guidance to managers on the stress policy
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment
- Encourage referral to Occupational Health Advisors/Counsellors.

14. Employees will:

- Monitor own work life balance including the practice of picking up messages on company blackberries and mobile telephones outside of substantive work hours or when on leave
- Raise issues of concern with their Line Manager, Occupational Health or Safety Representative
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

15. Trade Union Safety Representatives:

- Must be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress
- Must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys
- Be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process

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- Should be allowed access to collective and anonymous data from Human Resources
- Should be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any Trade Union training relating to workplace stress
- Should conduct joint inspections of the workplace at least every three months to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

16. Brigade/District Health and Safety Committees will:

- Perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented
- Oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM STRESS

17. You should consider the following options:

- Contacting Occupational Health
- Speaking to your manager
- Speaking to colleagues and friends/family
- Speaking to Human Resources
- Contacting your General Practitioner.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL YOUR MEMBER OF STAFF IS SUFFERING FROM STRESS

18. A manager should:

- Talk to the employee
- Encourage them to make an appointment with Occupational Health
- Seek advice from Human Resources –Transactional Services
- Seek advice from Occupational Health
- Monitor and review the situation.

**If you require any further guidance on this document, please contact
the Human Resources Directorate**

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THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

APPENDIX A

Some of the immediate and longer term effects of stress are listed below:

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS How we think and feel	PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS How our body reacts	BEHAVIOURAL How we behave
ANXIOUS	PALPITATIONS	ACCIDENT PRONENESS
ANGRY	PAIN AND TIGHTNESS IN THE CHEST	POOR WORK
DEPRESSED	INDIGESTION	INCREASED SMOKING
FRIGHTENED/NERVOUS	BREATHLESSNESS	AGGRESSIVE OR PASSIVE BEHAVIOUR
GUILTY	NAUSEA	IRRITABILITY
HURT	MUSCLE TWITCHES	IMPAIRED SPEECH
JEALOUS	TIREDNESS	INCREASED ABSENCE FROM WORK
OBSESSIVE	VAGUE ACHES AND PAINS	SULKING
ASHAMED/EMBARRASSED	SKIN IRRITATION OR RASHES	INCREASED ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
TENSE	TENDENCY TO CLENCH FISTS OR JAW	COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOUR
DRAINED, NO ENTHUSIASM	FAINTING	CHECKING RITUALS
CYNICAL	FREQUENT COLDS OR OTHER INFECTIONS	TALKING, WALKING, EATING FAST
HELPLESS	CONSTIPATION OR DIARRHOEA	CHANGE IN SLEEP PATTERN
REDUCED SELF ESTEEM	RAPID WEIGHT GAIN OR LOSS	LOSS OF LIBIDO
LACK OF CONCENTRATION	ALTERATION OF MESTRUAL PATTERN	WITHDRAWAL FROM SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS
SWINGS IN MOOD	ASTHMA	OVEREATING OR LOSS OF APPETITIE
WITHDRAWAL INTO DAYDREAMS	BACKACHE/NECK ACHE	POOR TIME MANAGEMENT
INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS OR IMAGES	EXCESSIVE SWEATING	EARLY MORNING WAKING
NIGHTMARES	MIGRAINES	INCREASED CAFFEINE INTAKE
PARANOID THINKING		
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS		