

Managing psychosocial risks at work

Guidelines for all businesses

When reviewing this draft guide please note:

- this draft does not necessarily present WorkSafe's final position on any matters contained within it
- this document is presented in a draft format. The layout is not final, tables and figures are still a work in progress
- we have proof reading processes so do not require a thorough review of grammar, consider this review a sense check only
- we expect there will be changes made to this draft as a result of submissions received.

Please provide any feedback by 5pm on 29 November 2024.

Psychosocial risks at work cause harm to workers' health (physical and mental) and must be effectively managed by businesses.

These good practice guidelines provide advice for businesses on managing psychosocial risks.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WorkSafe New Zealand would like to acknowledge and thank the stakeholders who have contributed to the development of this guidance.

Key points

- **Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA), businesses are legally required to manage psychosocial risks.**
- **Psychosocial risks are factors at work that can harm a worker's physical and mental health.**
- **Businesses must effectively manage psychosocial risks arising from how work is done, where work is done, and who work is done with.**

NOTE

These guidelines use 'must' and 'should' to indicate whether an action is required by law or is a recommended practice or approach.

Term	Definition
Must	Legal requirement that has to be complied with
Should	Recommended practice or approach

These guidelines are written for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs). These are referred to as 'business' or 'you' in these guidelines.

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Key concepts to understand before reading these guidelines

TERM/CONCEPT	BRIEF EXPLANATION
Absenteeism	Absence from work.
Anxiety	An emotion characterised by feelings of fear or apprehension about what is to come.
Burnout	A condition that occurs when long-term work stress is not handled well. It has three main signs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feeling tired and run down - feeling distant or negative about your job - feeling less effective or capable at work.
Control measure	A way of eliminating or minimising the risk of harm.
Consequence	The potential harms (injury/ill-health) that could be caused from psychosocial risks.
Depression	A mental illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Depression causes feelings of sadness, persistent low mood, and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home.
Duty holder under HSWA	A duty holder is a person who has a duty under HSWA. There are four duty holders – person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), officers, workers and other persons at a workplace.
Fatigue	A feeling of exhaustion, lethargy, or decreased energy. It is usually experienced as a weakening or depletion of one's physical or mental resources and results in decreased performance.
Health	This includes physical and mental health.
Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA)	HSWA is the work health and safety legislation in New Zealand. All work and workplaces are covered by HSWA unless specifically excluded. See Appendix 1 for more information.
Health and Safety Committee (HSC)	A Health and Safety Committee (HSC) supports the ongoing improvement of health and safety at work. An HSC enables PCBU representatives, workers and other HSC members to meet regularly and work cooperatively to ensure workers' health and safety. One of an HSC's main functions is to assist in developing standards, rules, and policies or procedures relating to work health and safety. An HSC can also perform other functions that are agreed between the PCBU and the HSC, or specified by the Regulations.
Health and Safety Representative (HSR)	A Health and Safety Representative (HSR) is a worker elected by the members of their work group to represent them in health and safety matters, in accordance with subpart 2 of Part 3 of HSWA. Throughout these guidelines, the term HSR means an elected representative who meets the requirements of HSWA and the Regulations. It does not apply to people who are referred to as HSRs under other arrangements, but who are not elected under HSWA. See 'Worker representative'.
Intervention	An action or initiative which could aim to minimise psychosocial risk or increase protective (positive) factors at work.
Likelihood	The chance of workers being exposed to psychosocial risks.
Mental harm	The significant cognitive, emotional, or behavioural impact arising from, or exacerbated by, work-related risk factors. Mental harm may be immediate or long-term and can come from a single or repeated exposure.
Mental health	The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their own community.
Mentally healthy work	Work where risks to people's mental health are eliminated or minimised, and their mental wellbeing is prioritised.

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD)	Disorders of the muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, bones and nerves.
Notifiable event	When someone dies or when a notifiable incident, illness or injury occurs as a result of work. (See sections 23 and 24 of HSWA.)
Officer	An officer is a person who has the ability to significantly influence the management of a PCBU. This includes, for example, company directors and chief executives. Officers must exercise due diligence to ensure the PCBU meets its health and safety obligations. See WorkSafe's special guide Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 for a detailed explanation of an officer's role and duties.
Other persons at workplaces	Other persons include workplace visitors and casual volunteers (who are not volunteer workers). Other persons at workplaces have their own health and safety duties to take reasonable care to keep themselves safe and to not harm others at a workplace.
Overlapping PCBU duties	When more than one PCBU has health and safety duties in relation to the same matter.
PCBU	PCBU stands for 'person conducting a business or undertaking'. In most cases a PCBU will be a business entity, such as a company. However, an individual carrying out business as a sole trader or self-employed person is also a PCBU. A PCBU does not include workers or officers of a PCBU, volunteer associations with no employees, or home occupiers that employ or engage a tradesperson to carry out residential work.
Presenteeism/disengaged	Being present at work but with reduced output.
Primary duty of care	A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by the PCBU's work. This is called the 'primary duty of care'.
Protective factors	Aspects of work that can enhance mental wellbeing.
Psychosocial factors	Aspects of work, like how work is designed (how you work), social factors at work (who you work with) and the work environment (where you work), that impact on mental and physical health. Factors can be both risk factors (negatives) and protective factors (positives) depending on the situation. For example, risk factors of interpersonal relationships at work such as poor relationships, conflict, harassment or violence can create risks such as bullying. Protective factors of interpersonal relationships at work such as good relationships, teamwork, clear policies to handle conflicts can promote wellbeing.
Psychosocial hazards	Psychosocial hazards are hazards that can arise from how you work, who you work with and where you work, that may cause mental and physical harm.
Psychosocial risks	A psychosocial risk is a risk to a worker or other person's health and safety that arises from a psychosocial hazard.
Safe systems of work	<p>A PCBU must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain safe systems of work (for example, work processes).</p> <p>Developing a safe system of work is a formal procedure carried out by a person with sufficient knowledge and experience. It involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the systematic examination of a task to identify risks that may arise from carrying it out • the identification of safe methods including control measures to eliminate or minimise the identified risks • the setting of methods to safely carry out the task. <p>The development of safe systems of work can involve looking at the physical layout of the workplace and its access and egress, tools, plant, procedures and people (for example, instruction, information, training).</p> <p>Systems of work should be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as appropriate.</p>

So far as is reasonably practicable	You do what is reasonable to ensure health and safety in your circumstances (for example, what a reasonable person in your position would be expected to know and do) – you do what is reasonable to first try to eliminate the risk. If the risk cannot be eliminated, then you must minimise it.
Stress	The physical and psychological reactions someone has when excessive pressures or demands are made upon them. Stress is a normal part of life but when it affects a person negatively this is when it can become harmful.
Toolbox talk	A toolbox talk is a short informal group meeting or discussion about a specific health or safety issue or topic. It is a good way to provide information to workers and to start health and safety conversations.
Union	A union is an organisation that supports its membership by advocating on their behalf. The Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA) gives employees the freedom to join unions and bargain collectively without discrimination. Workers can choose whether or not to join a union. A union is entitled to represent members' employment interests, including health and safety matters. Unions can access a workplace to deal with matters concerning the health and safety of union members. Union representatives must seek permission beforehand, which an employer cannot unreasonably withhold.
Worker	A worker is an individual who carries out work in any capacity for a PCBU. A worker may be an employee, a contractor or sub-contractor, an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor, an employee of a labour hire company, an outworker (including a homeworker), an apprentice or a trainee, a person gaining work experience or on a work trial, or a volunteer worker. Workers can be at any level (for example, managers are workers too). Although workers do not have specific duties for worker participation or engagement, they do have duties to keep themselves and others safe. HSWA requires workers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - take reasonable care of their own health and safety - take reasonable care that anything they do – or do not do – does not negatively affect the health and safety of other people - comply, as far as they can, with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU to allow the PCBU to comply with their duties under the legislation - cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to work health and safety that workers have been told about. Common policies and procedures cover reporting hazards, injuries and incidents, and the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE). The PCBU must engage with workers and their representatives when these policies are being developed.
Worker representative	In relation to a worker, means: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the Health and Safety Representative for the worker; or b. a union representing the worker; or c. any other person the worker authorises to represent them (for example, community or church leaders, lawyers, occupational physicians, nurses, respected members of ethnic communities). Workers can ask a worker representative to raise health and safety issues with a PCBU on their behalf.

Table 1: Key concepts for these guidelines

1.0 Introduction

A business must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by the work of the business. The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) defines 'health' as physical and mental health.

Psychosocial hazards and risks can be a serious risk to worker's health and can be present in any industry. It is your legal obligation to manage these risks at work.

1.1 Psychosocial hazards at work

Psychosocial hazards are hazards that may cause psychological and physical harm. They can arise from **how you work** (how work is designed), **who you work with** (social factors at work) and **where you work** (the work environment).

Not all psychosocial hazards will be of concern to every business. It is important to identify the hazards that could happen at your work and how much harm they could cause.

Some common psychosocial hazards include:

HAZARDS	
How you work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job demands - Lack of role clarity - Low job control - Poor organisational change management - Lack of job security - Remote or isolated work
Who you work with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor organisational culture - Lack of support - Inadequate recognition and reward - Poor work/life balance - Poor interpersonal relationships - Violence - Bullying - Harassment
Where you work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor physical work environment - Poor quality equipment - Notifiable events/traumatic events

Table 2: Common psychosocial hazards at work

Harm from psychosocial hazards may be immediate, long-term, and come from single or repeated exposure. They can result in mental harm such as stress, burnout, anxiety or depression or physical injury such as musculoskeletal disorders, heart disease or impaired immune systems.

1.2 Creating a mentally healthy work environment

Mentally healthy work is work that prevents harm and supports workers' mental health. Having a mentally healthy work environment can reduce the likelihood of harm.

In a mentally healthy work environment workers will feel good, function well, work effectively, have strong relationships, and thrive. This can also have benefits for your business such as a positive work culture, increased productivity and reduction of harm and significant health issues.

A mentally healthy work environment involves:

- prioritising and resourcing the mental health of your workers
- listening to your workers and ensuring their contributions are reflected in decisions
- dealing with issues quickly and efficiently through effective feedback processes

- regularly and openly engaging with your workers
- you emphasising the importance of mentally healthy work from an organisational level.

For more information on how to create a mentally healthy work environment, see our webpage: [Creating a mentally healthy work culture | WorkSafe](#)

WorkSafe is committed to supporting businesses create mentally healthy work as well as manage psychosocial risks. See our position statement on supporting mentally healthy work here: [Supporting mentally healthy work | WorkSafe](#)

1.3 When WorkSafe might intervene

WorkSafe’s policy sets out how we make decisions about when we intervene. For more information, see, WorkSafe’s webpage: [When we intervene | WorkSafe](#)

For work-related psychosocial risks we may intervene when a PCBU, group of PCBUs, or sector has a persistent pattern of serious harm or poorly managed serious risk.

We are unlikely to intervene in one-off or individual cases.

For more information on reporting unsafe or unhealthy work situations see WorkSafe’s webpage: [Raise a mentally healthy work concern | WorkSafe](#)

1.4 Who has health and safety duties and obligations?

As a PCBU you have a legal obligation to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by your work. This is called the ‘primary duty of care’, for more information, see WorkSafe’s webpage: [What is the primary duty of care? | WorkSafe](#)

While you must effectively manage psychosocial risks at work, everyone at work has a role to play. There are four types of people that have duties under HSWA – PCBUs, officers, workers, and other persons at workplaces. For more information on these roles and their duties see Appendix 1.

1.5 More information on mentally healthy work and related guidance

For more information on mentally healthy work, see: [Starting the mentally healthy work journey | WorkSafe](#)

We have more guidance on related topics available here:

Bullying	Bullying WorkSafe
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment WorkSafe
Work-related stress	Work-related stress WorkSafe
Fatigue	Fatigue WorkSafe
Violence at work (customer service)	Violence at work: customer service areas WorkSafe
Shift work	Managing the risks of shift work WorkSafe
Working from home (guidance for PCBUs)	Mental health when working from home: for PCBUs WorkSafe

Working from home (guidance for workers)

[Staying mentally healthy when working from home | WorkSafe](#)

Table 3: Links to related guidance

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2.0 Using a risk management process to manage psychosocial risks

Risks to health and safety arise from people being exposed to a hazard.

As a PCBU, you must manage your work risks so that workers and other peoples' health and safety is not put at risk by the work that you do.

Risk management is about:

- identifying hazards, see Section 3
- assessing risks, see Section 4
- putting in place control measures to eliminate risks so far as is reasonably practicable or minimise them if elimination is not possible, see Section 5
- regularly reviewing control measures, see Section 6.

When addressing psychosocial risks, you should have systems in place that:

- proactively protect workers from harm (for example, designing work that eliminates risks so far as is reasonably practicable or minimises them if this is not possible),
- support mental health,
- restore workers' health when harm occurs.

You must consult with your workers and their representatives at all steps of the risk management process. For more information, see Section 2.2 and Appendix 3 of these guidelines.

For more information, see our guidance: [How to manage work risks | WorkSafe](#)

2.1 Leadership and commitment to managing psychosocial risks

Commitment from leaders and managers is essential to effectively managing psychosocial risks. Leaders and managers could include yourself as a PCBU, officers, chief executives, business owners, human resource practitioners, managers, team leaders, supervisors, health and safety representatives, and senior workers.

Leaders and management need to understand:

- the health and safety obligations of PCBUs, officers, and workers
- their role in supporting the PCBU and officers to meet these duties
- the importance of a clear, organised approach to managing psychosocial risks,
- why managing psychosocial risks is important for business.

2.2 Engage with your workers to help you manage psychosocial risks

You must, so far as is reasonably practicable, engage with workers on health and safety matters that will – or are likely to – affect them. You must also provide reasonable opportunities for workers to participate effectively in improving health and safety on an ongoing basis.

Not all workers are affected the same way by psychosocial risks. It is important to listen to your workers' perspectives - they can help you identify, assess, manage and monitor psychosocial risks.

You should provide workers with information about psychosocial hazards and risks in a timely manner so that workers are well-informed, know what is going on and can have a real say in decision-making.

The best ways to engage with workers and ensure their participation on an ongoing basis will depend on the views and needs of workers, your business size, and level of risk or the type of work carried out.

Worker engagement and worker participation practices can be direct (for example, by individual workers talking directly to you) or through representation (for example, using formal or informal representatives). Effective engagement uses a mix of formal and informal approaches to encourage workers to respond.

You should make sure you are engaging with workers from different backgrounds because even if two people have the same work, they might not face the same risks or respond to them in the same way. Workers who traditionally suffer higher levels of harm include:

- Māori,
- Pacific peoples,
- migrants,
- workers who are vulnerable because of age, inexperience or conditions of employment and
- workers who are new to the job.

Young workers, disabled workers, and workers with limited English or difficulties reading, writing or communication may be less likely to speak up if they are unsure.

See Appendix 3 of these guidelines for more information on worker engagement.

3.0 Step 1: Identify hazards

A psychosocial hazard is a potential source or cause of mental and physical harm.

Not all psychosocial hazards will be of concern to every business. With your workers, you must identify the hazards that could be present in your work and how much harm they could cause.

You will likely have a combination of psychosocial hazards that workers may be exposed to, however some hazards alone can cause serious harm, such as violence at work.

Every work environment or work activity will be different. Looking at your systems of work, for example, how work is done, who work is done with, or where work is done and thinking about things that could go wrong may help you to identify hazards. Figure 4 provides a list of areas you might identify potential psychosocial hazards.

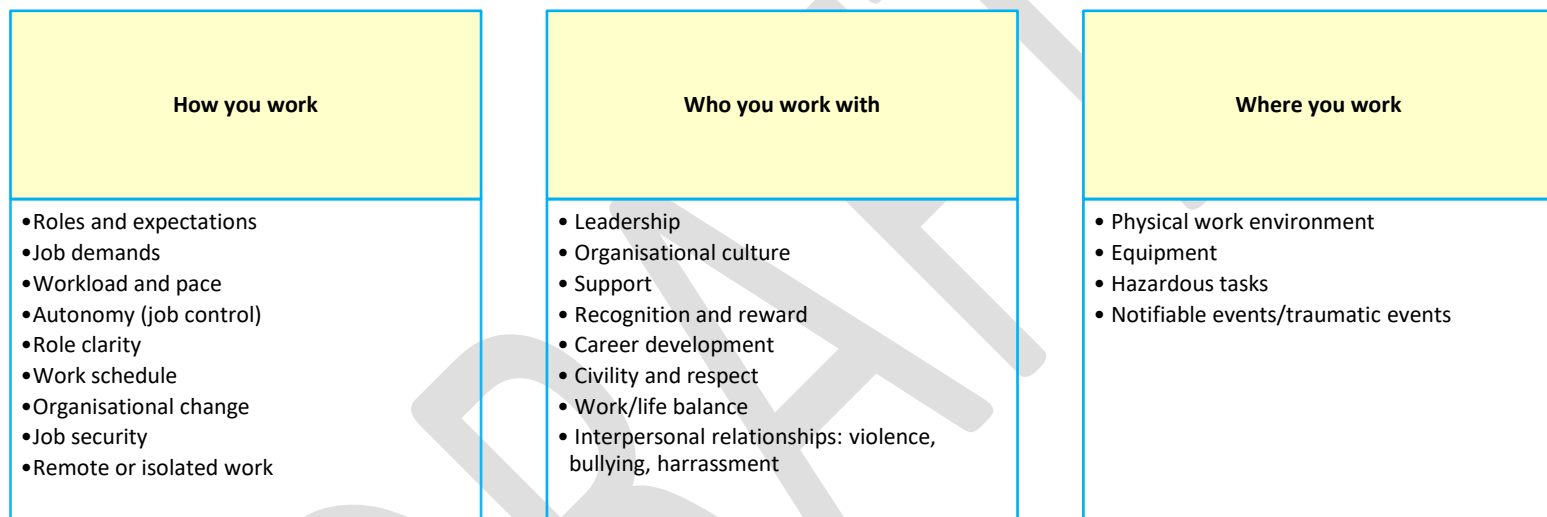


Figure 1: Areas you might identify psychosocial hazards in

Figures 2 – 4 provide examples of common psychosocial hazards in each of these areas, however, it is not an exhaustive list.

Examples of psychosocial hazards relating to how you work

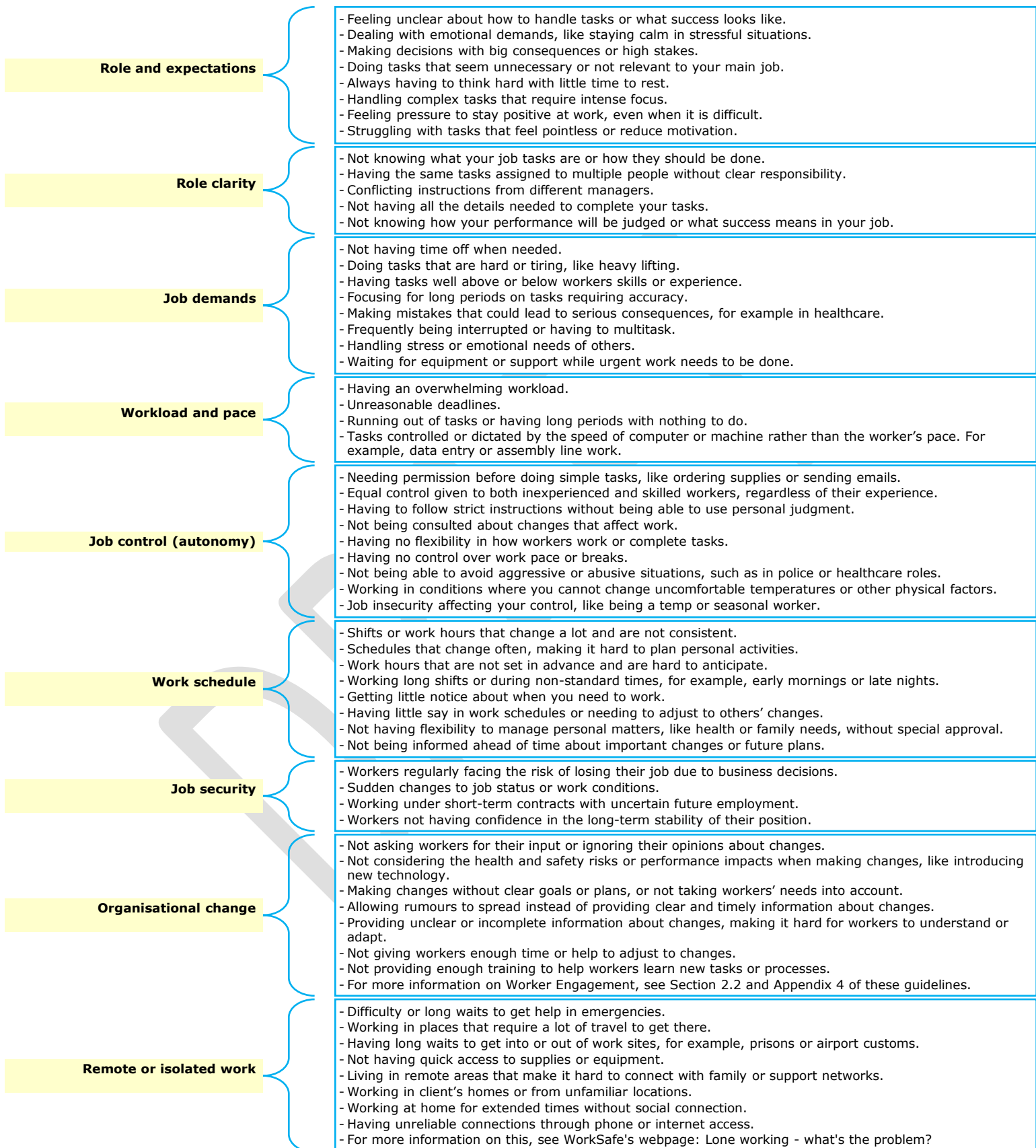


Figure 2: Examples of psychosocial hazards relating to how you work

Examples of psychosocial hazards relating to who you work with

Organisational culture

- A work environment where negativity, criticism or blame is common.
- Workers not supporting or collaborating with each other.
- Information not being shared openly or effectively within the team.
- Workers competing against each other in ways that create tension or conflict.
- Having a work environment that lacks clear values or standards for how people should behave.
- An environment where new ideas or improvements are discouraged or ignored.

Civility and respect

- Using hurtful or offensive language towards others.
- Not acknowledging other's ideas or efforts.
- Deliberately leaving someone out of conversations, meetings or activities.
- Repeatedly mistreating or belittling someone at work.
- Unwanted comments, jokes or actions that make someone feel uncomfortable.
- Treating someone unfairly because of their race, gender, age or other personal characteristics.

Interpersonal relationships

- Seeing or experiencing people being treated badly, like being ignored or disrespected.
- Poor team dynamics, like not working well together or having regular misunderstandings which hurt how well the team gets along.
- Violence – physical assaults, verbal threats and aggressive behaviour from other workers, clients, customers or the public. For more information see WorkSafe's webpage: Violence at work
- Bullying – continuous criticism, social isolation and spreading false information. For more information on see WorkSafe's webpage: Bullying
- Harassment – sexual harassment, discriminatory harassment (targeting based on personal characteristics such as race, gender or religion), and hostile work environments. For more information see WorkSafe's webpage: Sexual harassment

Leadership

- Workers not being given clear expectations on what needs to be done.
- Workers not being involved in decisions that impact their job.
- Not keeping workers informed about important changes or updates.
- No visible leadership to set achievement or respond to.

Support

- Not receiving necessary details or getting confusing instructions.
- Not having the equipment or resources needed to do the job.
- Being asked to do complex tasks without training.
- Having absent managers who cannot make decisions or help.
- Not getting guidance or assistance from managers or other workers.
- Not being able to pause work or get help when needed, especially if working remotely.
- A work environment where helping each other is not encouraged or supported.
- Not having a suitable environment for sensitive discussions.
- Managers ignoring struggles or not providing ways to raise concerns.
- Receiving unclear or unhelpful performance feedback, or not getting feedback at all.

Recognition and reward

- Not getting feedback on work or being acknowledged for effort and successful completion of tasks.
- Rewards being given out to some but not others.
- Someone taking credit for someone else's work.
- Not having skills and experience acknowledged, limiting chances for job training or career growth.

Career development

- Not getting opportunities to learn new skills or improve existing ones.
- Having few or no chances to be promoted.
- Not having access to courses, workshops or other educational resources.
- Being stuck in the same role without the chance to take on new challenges.
- Skills and talents being overlooked, and workers are not given opportunities to use them.
- Barriers that prevent workers from pursuing career goals, like company policies or lack of support.

Work/life balance

- Consistently working late or on weekends, leaving little time for personal activities.
- Being expected to answer calls or emails outside of work hours.
- Taking on too much work, leaving no time for rest or whānau (family).
- Work demands that cause stress and make it hard to relax or enjoy time off.
- Not being able to take breaks or holidays to recharge.

Figure 3: Examples of psychosocial hazards relating to who you work with

Examples of psychosocial hazards relating to where you work

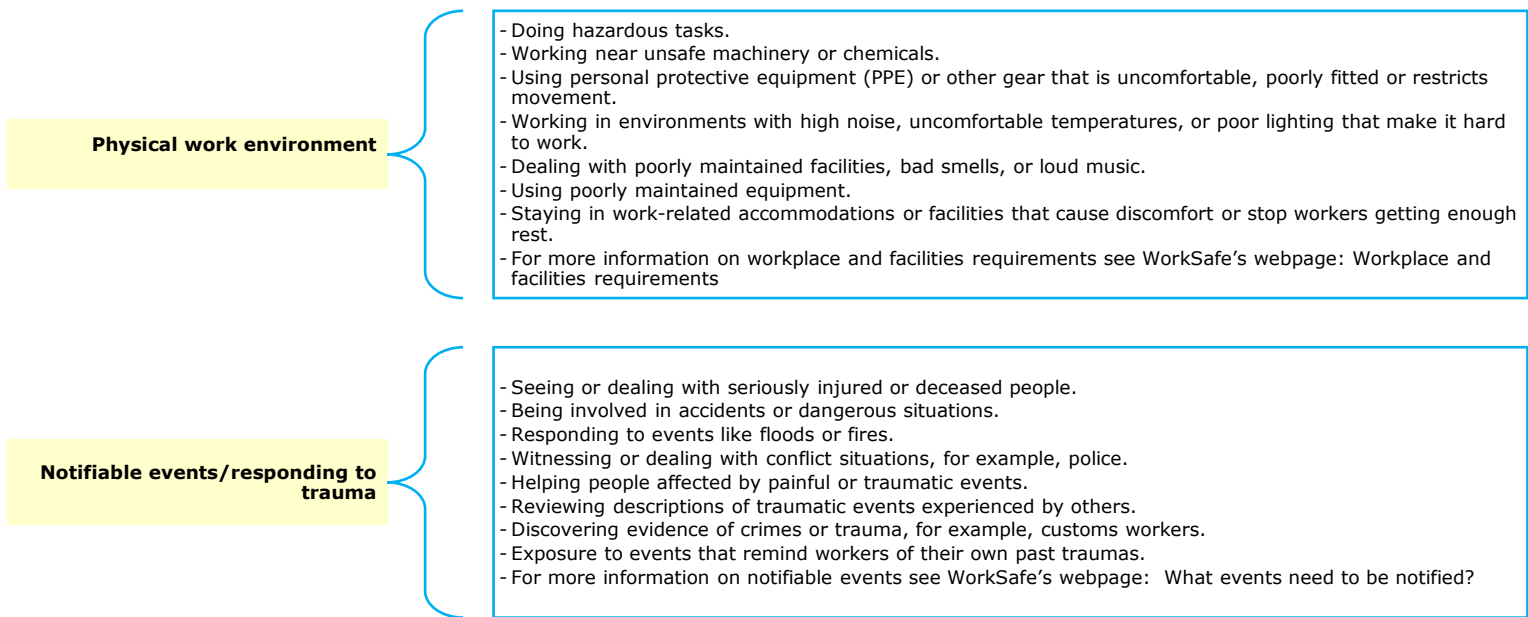


Figure 4: Examples of psychosocial hazards relating to where you work

3.1 Identifying protective factors to support workers mental health

As well as identifying hazards, your process should also identify protective factors. These are factors at work that can support mental health and help you reduce harm. Figure 5 provides examples of protective factors.

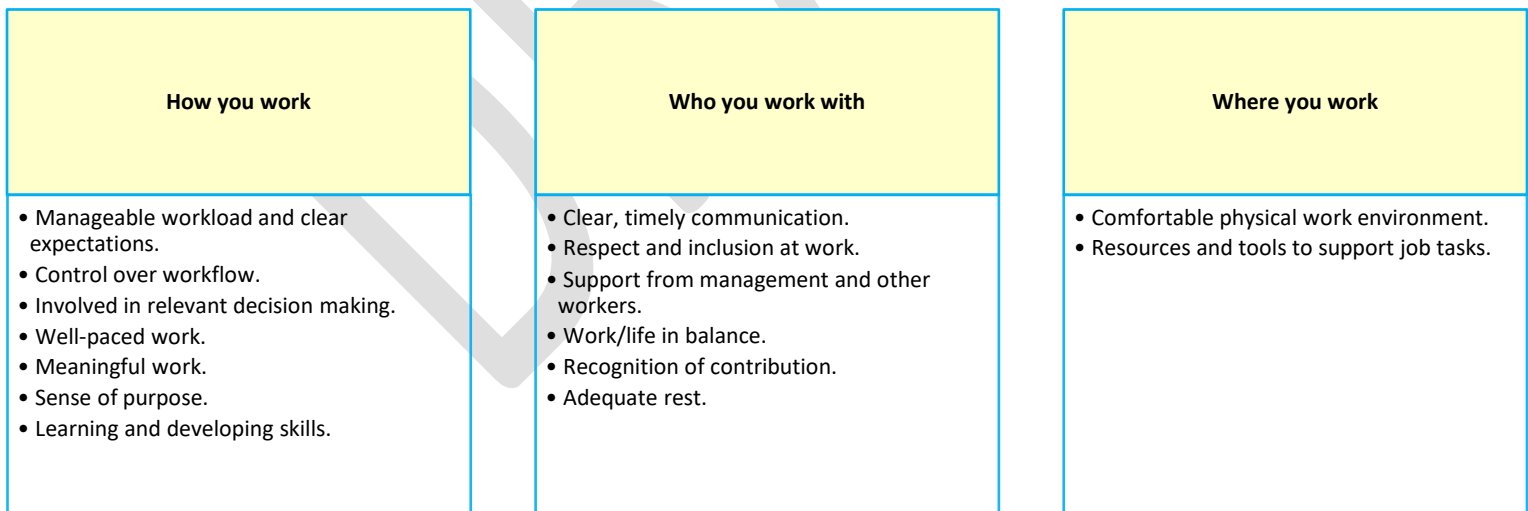


Figure 5: Examples of protective factors

3.2 Ways you can identify hazards

Figure 6 provides a list of information sources you could use to look for trends that could help you identify psychosocial hazards.

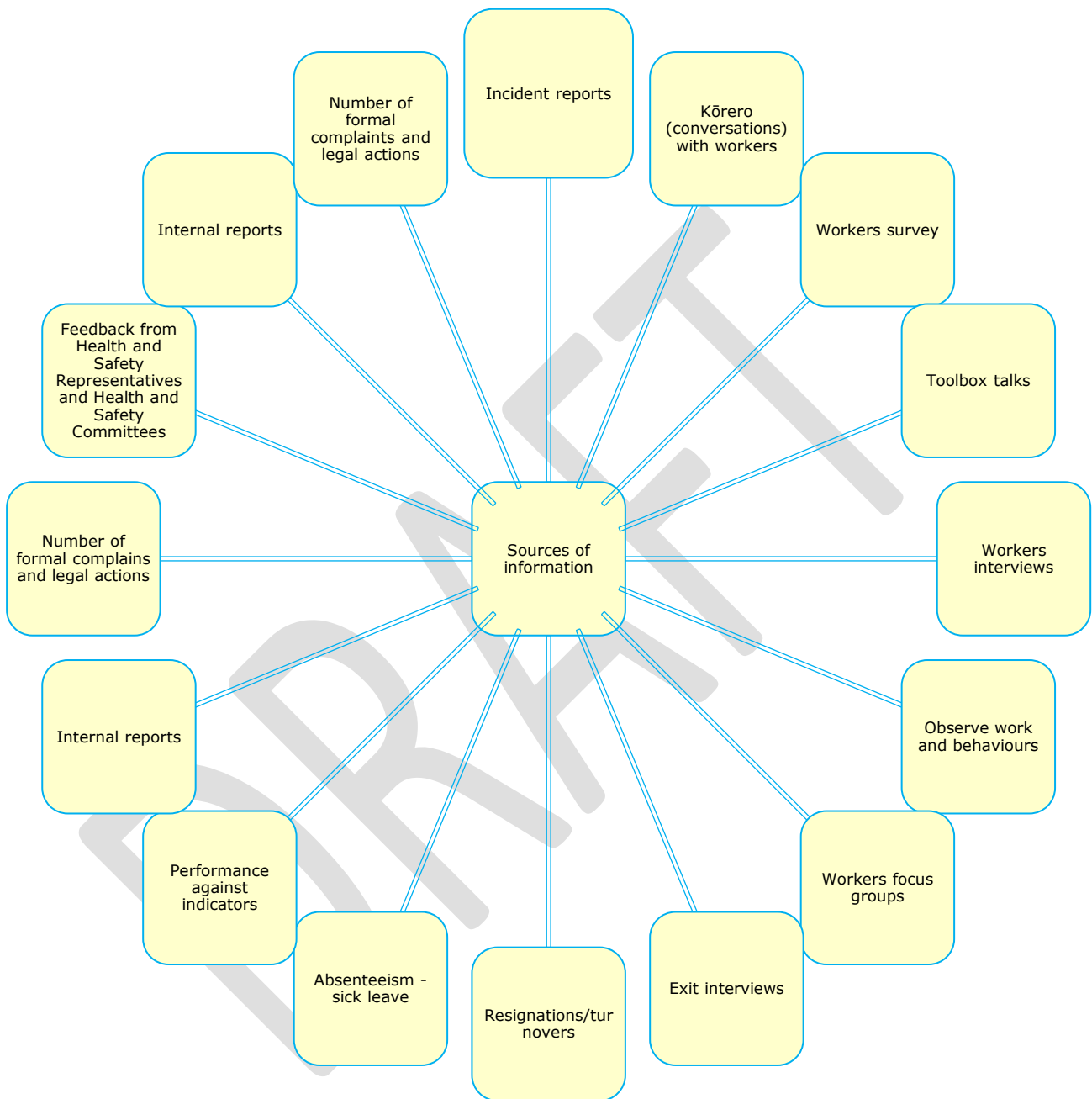


Figure 6: Sources of information to help you identify psychosocial hazards

For more information on sources of information, see Section 2.2 of WorkSafe’s bullying guidance: [Preventing and responding to bullying at work | WorkSafe](#)

Discuss with your workers what information sources you will use and explain how you will handle personal information, including when it may need to be shared for valid reasons.

4.0 Step 2: Assess psychosocial risks

You will need to carry out a risk assessment for each hazard you have identified. Assessing the level of risk a hazard presents helps prioritise the actions you need to take to protect workers from harm. You should involve your workers in this process.

Risk has two components – the likelihood that it will occur and the consequences if it happens.

4.1 How to assess psychosocial risks

Seek the views of your workers and their representatives when assessing work risks. Your workers will have operational day-to-day knowledge that will be invaluable when assessing work risks.

Below are some of the things you should consider with your workers when carrying out a risk assessment.

When working out how likely the consequences are, consider:

- **frequency** - how often are workers exposed to psychosocial risks?
- **duration** - how long workers are exposed to psychosocial risks (minutes, hours, weeks, months, years)?
- **intensity** – how severe or noticeable the risk is to the worker (for example, low or high job demands, being yelled at versus subtle comments, exposure to a traumatic incident)?
- **protective factors** – whether workers are regularly exposed to protective factors, like good work design, supportive colleagues, leaders, and organisational culture?

When working out what the consequences could be, consider:

- what harm (injuries/ill-health) could occur?
- what could influence how severe the harm is (for example, the level of work-related stress a worker experiences influences how severe their mental health issues could become)?
- who could be harmed (for example, workers or customers? A single person, or many?)
- how might different workers experience the potential risks (for example, different tasks in different teams or inexperienced workers)?
- could a small incident escalate to a more serious one (for example, could minor workplace bullying lead to long-term mental health issues?)
- could others be negatively impacted, even if they are not directly involved (for example, a hostile work environment, witnessing harm to others, low worker engagement, increased sick leave, and an unsafe workload could all arise and impact others at work)?

You should think about psychosocial hazards as a group rather than individually. Workers may face more than one hazard at the same time, and these hazards can interact or make each other worse. For example, a worker facing tight deadlines may be more stressed if they also have unclear instructions and are receiving little support from their manager. By assessing the risks together, you can find better ways to manage them.

It is important to remember that even if the immediate consequences seem minor, the overall impact can add up over time. Regular exposure to risks, even if they seem low at first, can lead to more serious problems over time.

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5.0 Step 3: Manage the risk

You must first try to eliminate the risk. If a risk cannot be eliminated it must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable using control measures.

Every work environment or work activity will be different. To manage risks, you should aim to use a combination of control measures suitable to your businesses size, workers needs and the type of work you do.

Focusing on how work is organised can be a more effective way of managing risks. You should design work that meets workers needs, builds strong social relationships, and creates a positive work environment to help prevent harm occurring.

Seek the views of your workers and their representatives when making decisions about the ways to eliminate or minimise risk. They may be able to suggest practical cost-effective solutions or identify the pros and cons of different options.

Seek help from suitably qualified professionals where necessary.

5.1 You must work with other businesses you share monitoring duties with

You must work together with other PCBUs if you share health and safety duties (this could happen when you share a workplace or you are in a contracting chain). A shared duty could include managing shared risks (including psychosocial risks).

For more information about working with other businesses, see Appendix 3.

5.2 Identifying possible control measures

With your workers, identify as many control measures as possible to eliminate or minimise the psychosocial risks you have identified. Figures 7 - 9 provides examples of control measures. When choosing control measures, you need to think about all the hazards present and how they may interact and make things worse.

Examples of control measures relating to how you work

Role and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give clear job descriptions so workers know what is expected of them. - Check in regularly to address any challenges and offer support, especially for high-pressure decisions or emotional stress. - Prioritise important tasks and allow time for breaks to manage mental demands.
Role clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure everyone knows their job tasks and who is responsible for what. - Avoid assigning the same tasks to multiple people without clear roles and ensure that instructions are consistent. - Provide all necessary information upfront so workers know how to complete their tasks and what success looks like in their job.
Job demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure tasks are suitable for the workers' skills and experience. - Manage heavy or tiring work and allow breaks for mentally demanding tasks. - Minimise interruptions, provide needed equipment, and support workers handling stress or emotional demands of others.
Workload and pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Balance the workload so no one is overwhelmed. - Allow for regular breaks and adjust tasks if someone is working too fast or too slow to meet their targets.
Job control (autonomy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give workers more control over how they do their tasks, including flexibility with work pace and breaks. - Avoid strict instructions when personal judgment can be used and consult workers about changes that affect their jobs. - Offer flexibility where possible to reduce stress.
Work schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create fair and predictable work schedules. - Avoid last-minute changes and consider flexible hours if it helps workers balance their job with other responsibilities.
Job security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be transparent about job security. - If there are concerns about redundancies, provide regular updates and support to reduce anxiety.
Organisational change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep workers informed about changes in the business. - Provide support and training if their job is going to change and give them time to adjust.
Remote or isolated work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure workers working alone or in isolated locations have access to help, especially in emergencies. - Minimise long travel times, ensure quick access to supplies, and provide reliable communication tools. - Support workers who may feel socially isolated, especially when working from home or unfamiliar locations. - For more information, see WorkSafe's webpage: Lone working - what's the problem?

Figure 7: Examples of control measures for how you work

Examples of control measures relating to who you work with

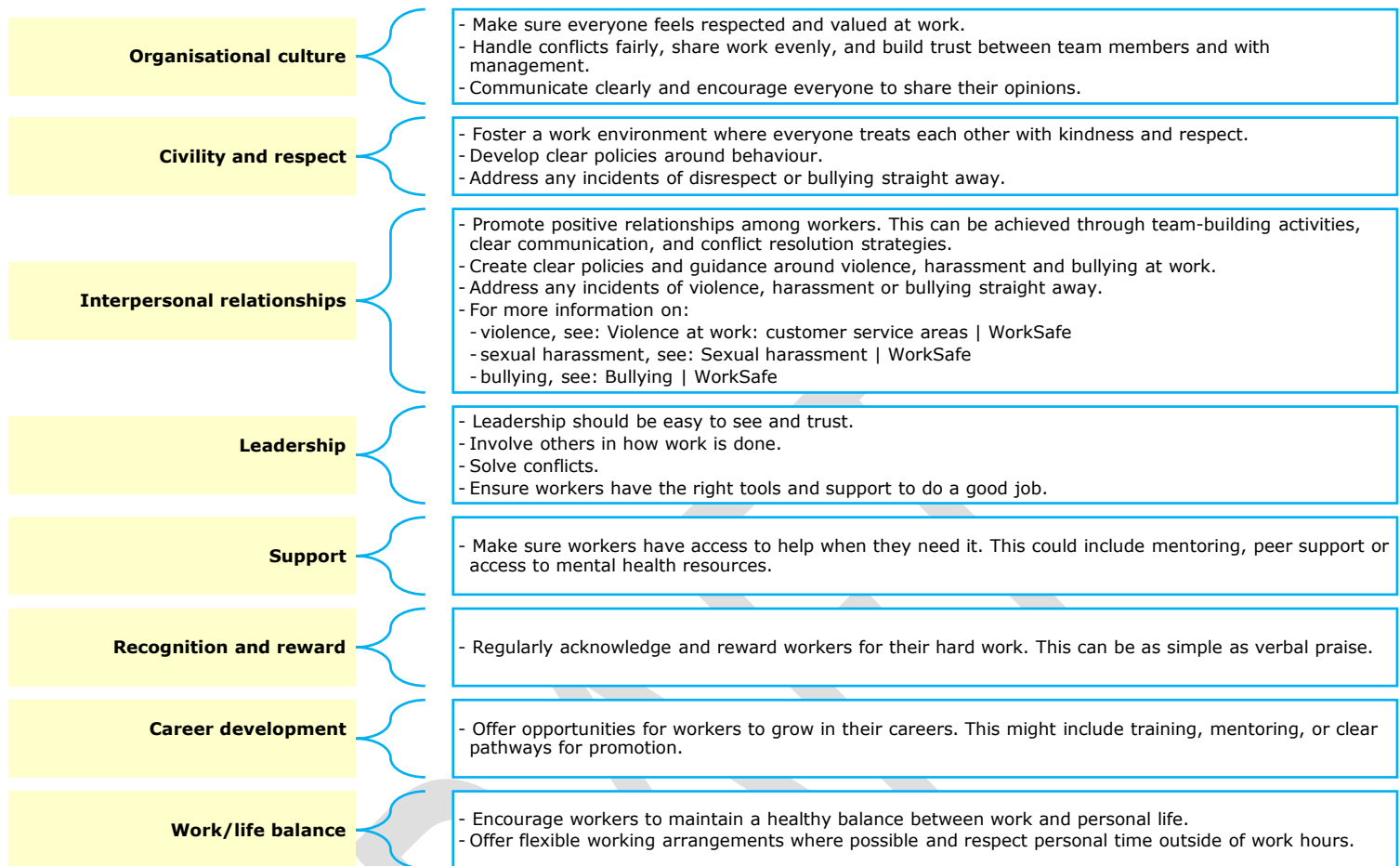


Figure 8: Examples of control measures relating to who you work with

Examples of control measures for where you work

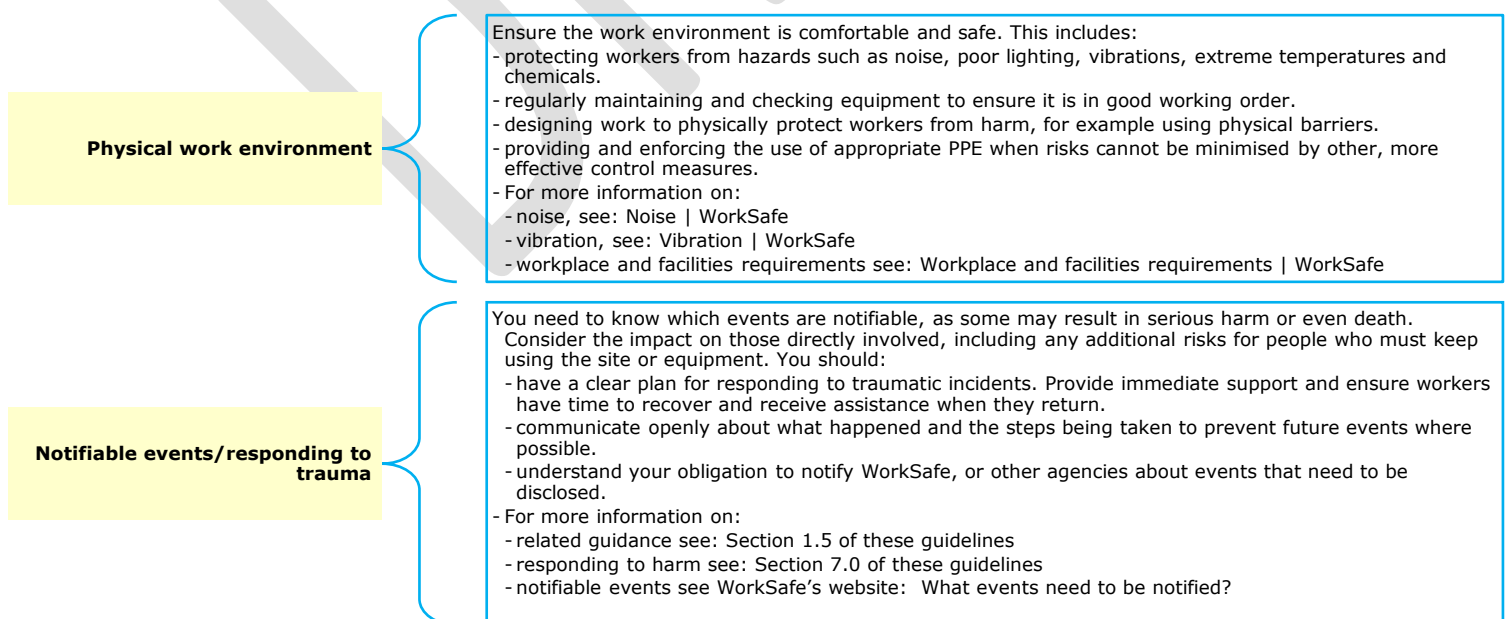


Figure 9: Examples of control measures relating to where you work

5.3 Using the levels of intervention model to choose the most effective control measures

Use the levels of interventions model to help you work out the most effective control measures so far as is reasonably practicable.

When addressing psychosocial risks, you should aim to have systems in place that:

- proactively protects workers from harm
- supports workers mental health
- helps workers recover if harm happens.

The levels of intervention model can help you organise your identified control measures to achieve this.

There are three different levels of interventions for preventing and managing psychosocial risks – primary, secondary and tertiary. Figure 10 describes each of these levels.

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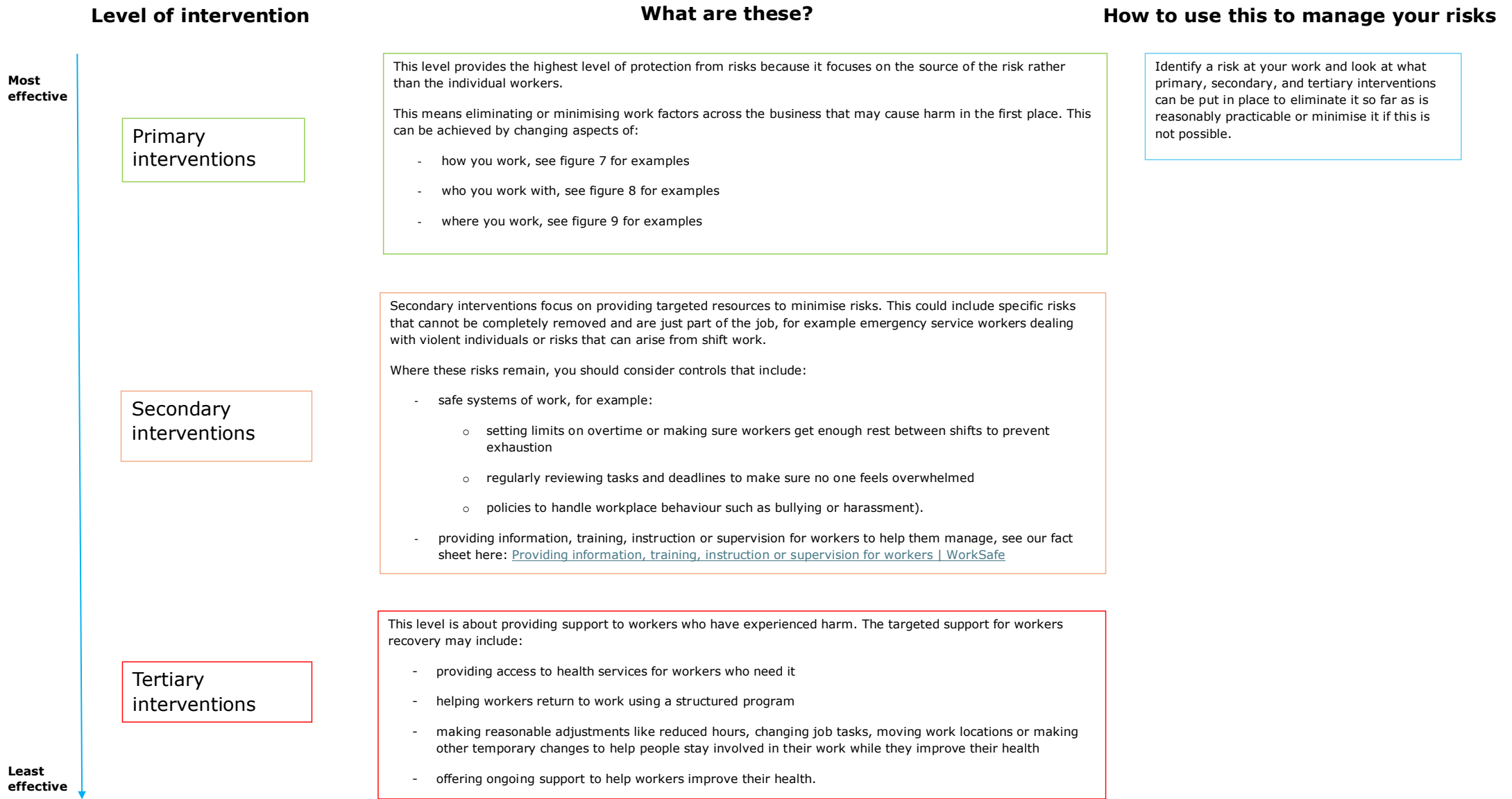


Figure 10: Levels of intervention model for managing psychosocial risks

5.4 What to consider when deciding what is 'reasonably practicable'

Just because something is possible to do, does not mean it is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.

Consider:

- what possible actions can be taken to ensure health and safety?
- of these possible actions, at a particular time, what is reasonable to do?

Think about the following questions.

What is known about the risk?

- How likely is the risk to occur?
- How severe is the harm that might occur if something goes wrong?
- What is known, or should reasonably be known, about the risk?

What is known about possible control measures?

- What is known, or should reasonably be known, about the ways (control measures) to eliminate or minimise the risk?
- What control measures are available?
- How appropriate (suitable) are the control measures to manage the risk?
- What are the costs of these control measures?
- Are the costs grossly disproportionate to the risk? Cost must only be used as a reason to not do something when that cost is grossly out of proportion to the risk.

For more information, see Appendix 2.

5.5 Put control measures in place

As soon as you have decided what the most effective control measures are, you should:

- put the control measures in place
- make sure your workers know about the potential risks, what the control measures to manage the risks are and why it is important to use them, and how to apply them
- review and update your emergency procedures/plans if needed.

5.6 Recording how you are managing your risks

It is good practice to keep written records of how you are managing your risks. Written records mean you can more easily review how you are dealing with risks if something changes. You can also use these records to train your workers about psychosocial risks and the control measures put in place to manage them.

To keep your risk management effective, it is important to regularly review and update your processes. Your records are only valuable if they are relevant and actively engaged with the work and workers. Take the time to reassess and identify new hazards and ensure that risks are managed effectively. You can find more information about this in Section 6 of these guidelines.

If you collect personal information during risk management (like through incident reports) or while supporting workers who have been harmed, ensure you explain to workers how you will handle personal information, including when it may need to be shared for valid reasons.

For more information on how risks are recorded see WorkSafe's guidelines: [Identifying, assessing and managing work risks \(worksafe.govt.nz\)](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)

6.0 Step 4: Review control measures

Control measures should be monitored and regularly reviewed in consultation with your workers to make sure they remain effective at eliminating or minimising psychosocial risks. Reviews should occur regularly and:

- when a new hazard or risk is identified
- if a control measure is not effectively eliminating or minimising the risk
- if new control measures are identified to manage the risk
- before and during making significant changes at work, like a change to the work environment or systems
- if workers or their representatives ask for one.

Monitoring the performance of control measures will show you if your control measures are working effectively. You can use the same methods for identifying hazards outlined in Section 3.2 to do this. Seek the views of your workers or their representatives when deciding about procedures for monitoring.

Use the results from your monitoring to help you to continually improve the effectiveness of the control measures, consider:

- are the control measures and interventions effective?
- is harm occurring?

If there is any doubt about the effectiveness of the control measures, with your workers, go back through the risk management process and decide whether your existing control measures are still the most appropriate to use or whether new ones are needed.

7.0 How to respond when a worker experiences mental harm

Most psychosocial hazards and risks should be identified during your risk management process but sometimes you might only learn about them when an incident is reported.

7.1 Investigate reports

When an incident is reported you should:

- begin an investigation quickly and fairly
- decide how thorough the investigation should be. This will depend on the level of risk, seriousness of harm, and number of workers affected. For a small business, this might be as simple as having a discussion with workers, while larger businesses may involve health and safety professionals
- make sure the people investigating understand psychosocial hazards and risks
- keep the process fair, objective and timely
- keep affected workers informed throughout the process
- have clear steps to protect workers' personal information. Keep it confidential and let workers know if there are any limits to this confidentiality
- keep good documentation. Even if the incident is not formally investigated, keep a record of all informal conversations, meetings and interviews detailing dates and times, who was present, what was discussed and the agreed outcomes
- continue to control risks while the investigation is happening to prevent further harm.

7.2 Support a return-to-work program

Workers who have experienced mental harm may need work adjustments as they work through their recovery. For more information on supporting a return-to-work see [business.govt.nz: Supporting a return to work after illness or injury – business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz/supporting-a-return-to-work-after-illness-or-injury)

Returning workers might face new risks due to a change in tasks or work environment so you should regularly check for any new risks as a result and manage them accordingly.

7.3 Getting external help

At times, you or your workers may wish to seek external help.

Who can help you to manage risks

If you need help, you may wish to get advice from a suitably qualified and experienced health and safety professional or associations in your sector. Other services who could help include:

- Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (HASANZ)
- Organisational, health and educational psychologists
- Human factors and ergonomics (HFE) professionals and occupational health professionals
- Human resources (HR) specialists

Who can help workers

If workers need additional help from trained professionals, you should let them know about support services they can access. These support services could include:

- Local general practitioners (GPs)
- Community support organisation in your area, this could include iwi and peer support organisations
- Counselling services
- Clinical psychologists
- Alcohol drug helpline for support for workers suffering from addiction
- Family violence support services

If any of your workers are in immediate danger, please call 111 or take them to the nearest hospital emergency department.

For more information on reporting unsafe or unhealthy work situation, see WorkSafe’s webpage: [Raise a mentally healthy work concern | WorkSafe](#)

For more information on where to get further help for workers, see WorkSafe’s webpage: [Information for workers – where to get help | WorkSafe](#)

Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment’s (MBIE) Business.govt.nz also has useful resources on mental health and wellbeing that may be useful to small businesses, see: [Mental health and wellbeing support – business.govt.nz](#)

Other agencies who can help

Psychosocial risks can cause different types of harm, and there are a range of agencies that can help. The scenarios in Table 2 provides examples of when it might be better for other agencies to step in.

Scenario	Legislation and who you should contact
If you think a crime may have been committed, you should report that to the Police.	New Zealand Police Crimes Act
If harmful messages, photos, or videos are shared online and cause serious emotional distress, the Harmful Digital Communications Act (HDCA) may apply.	NETSAFE Harmful Digital Communications Act (HDCA)
If you think a person is being harassed, it might be appropriate to report that to the Police.	New Zealand Police Harassment Act
If someone is repeatedly verbally or emotionally mistreated at work, and it creates an unsafe environment, they could contact Employment New Zealand to help resolve problems in the workplace. PCBUs must ensure the workplace is safe.	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Employment Relations Act Resolving a problem in the workplace: Problems in the workplace Employment New Zealand
A PCBU must eliminate or minimise work risks so far as is reasonably practicable.	WorkSafe

	Health and Safety at Work Act To raise a notification: Raise a mentally healthy work concern WorkSafe
If discrimination (for example based on race, disability, sexual orientation, or gender) causes mental harm, it may fall under the Human Rights Act.	Human Rights Commission Human Rights Act

Table 4: Other agencies who can help

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 duties

[The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) (HSWA) is New Zealand’s key work health and safety law.

All work and workplaces are covered by HSWA unless they have been specifically excluded. For example, HSWA does not apply to the armed forces in certain situations.

HSWA sets out the work health and safety duties that duty holders must comply with.

- There are four types of duty holder under HSWA:
- a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)
 - an officer
 - a worker
 - an ‘other person’ at the workplace.

Most duties under HSWA relate to **how** work is carried out. However some duties are linked to **where** work is carried out: the workplace.

A **workplace** is a place where work is being carried out or usually carried out for a business or undertaking. It includes any place where a worker goes or is likely to be while at work ([section 20 of HSWA](#)).

Duty holder	Who are they?	Examples	What are their duties?	For more information
Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)	<p>A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) may be an individual person or an organisation.</p> <p><i>The following are not PCBUs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - officers - workers - other persons at a workplace - volunteer associations that do not have employees - home occupiers (such as home owners or tenants) who pay someone to do work around the home (section 17 of HSWA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a business - a self-employed person - partners in a partnership - a government agency - a local council - a school or university. 	<p>A PCBU has many duties. Key duties are summarised below.</p> <p>Primary duty of care (section 36 of HSWA) A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by its work.</p> <p>Managing risks (section 30 of HSWA) Risks to health and safety arise from people being exposed to hazards (anything that can cause harm). A PCBU must manage work health and safety risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A PCBU must first try to eliminate a risk so far as is reasonably practicable. This can be done by removing the source of harm – for example, removing faulty equipment or a trip hazard. - If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, it must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable. <p>Overlapping duties: working with other PCBUs (section 34 of HSWA) A PCBU with overlapping duties must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with other PCBUs they share duties</p>	<p>Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015</p> <p>Section 5.4 and Appendix 2 of this guidance for an explanation of ‘so far as is reasonably practicable’</p> <p>Identifying, assessing and managing work risks</p> <p>Sections 2- 6 of this guidance</p> <p>Appendix 3 of this guidance</p>

Duty holder	Who are they?	Examples	What are their duties?	For more information
			with.	
			<p>Involving workers: worker engagement, participation and representation (Part 3 of HSWA)</p> <p>A PCBU must, so far as is reasonably practicable, engage with their workers (or their workers' representatives) about health and safety matters that will directly affect the workers.</p> <p>A PCBU must have worker participation practices that give their workers reasonable opportunities to participate in improving health and safety on an ongoing basis.</p>	Section 2.2 and Appendix 4 of this guidance
Upstream PCBU	A PCBU in the supply chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a designer - a manufacturer - a supplier - an importer - an installer, constructor, or commissioner. 	<p>Upstream PCBU (sections 39-43 of HSWA)</p> <p>An upstream PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the work they do or the things they provide to other workplaces do not create health and safety risks.</p>	Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
Officer	A specified person or a person who exercises significant influence over the management of the business or undertaking (section 18 of HSWA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a company director - a partner or general partner - a chief executive. 	<p>Officer (section 44 of HSWA)</p> <p>An officer must exercise due diligence that includes taking reasonable steps to ensure that the PCBU meets their health and safety duties.</p>	Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
Worker	An individual who carries out work for a PCBU (section 19 of HSWA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an employee - a contractor or sub-contractor - an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor - an employee of a labour hire company - an outworker (including homeworker) - an apprentice or trainee - a person gaining work experience or on work trials - a volunteer worker. 	<p>Worker (section 45 of HSWA)</p> <p>A worker must take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and take reasonable care that they do not harm others at work.</p> <p>A worker must cooperate with reasonable policies and procedures the PCBU has in place that the worker has been told about.</p> <p>A worker must comply, as far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU so the PCBU can meet their legal duties.</p>	Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
Other person at the workplace	An individual present at a workplace (not a worker)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a workplace visitor - a casual volunteer (not a volunteer worker) - a customer. 	<p>Other person at the workplace (section 46 of HSWA)</p> <p>An 'other person' has a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and not adversely affect the health and safety of anyone else.</p> <p>They must comply, as far as they are reasonably able, with reasonable instructions relating to health and safety at the workplace.</p>	Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

Appendix 2: So far as is reasonably practicable ([section 22 of HSWA](#))

Certain PCBU duties (the [section 36-43 duties](#) including the primary duty of care) must be carried out 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

What to consider when deciding what is 'reasonably practicable'

Just because something is possible to do, does not mean it is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.

Consider:

- What possible actions can be taken to ensure health and safety?
- Of these possible actions, at a particular time, what is reasonable to do?

Think about the following questions.

What is known about the risk?

- How likely is the risk to occur?
- How severe is the illness or injury that might occur if something goes wrong?
- What is known, or should reasonably be known, about the risk?

What is known about possible control measures?

- What is known, or should reasonably be known, about the ways (control measures) to eliminate or minimise the risk?
- What control measures are available?
- How appropriate (suitable) are the control measures to manage the risk?
- What are the costs of these control measures?
- Are the costs grossly disproportionate to the risk? Cost must only be used as a reason to not do something when that cost is grossly out of proportion to the risk.

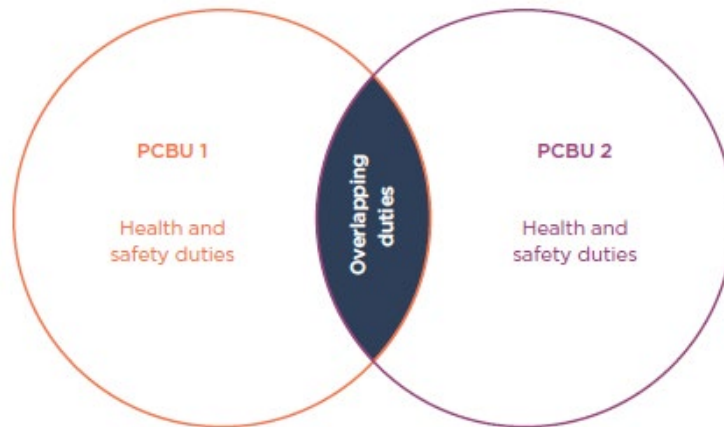
While PCBUs should check if there are widely used control measures for that risk (such as industry standards), they should always keep their specific circumstances in mind. A common industry practice might not be the most effective or appropriate control measure to use.

If PCBUs are not sure what control measures are appropriate, WorkSafe recommends getting advice from a suitably qualified and experienced health and safety professional.

For more information, see our guidance: [Reasonably practicable](#)

Appendix 3: Working with other PCBU – overlapping duties ([section 34 of HSWA](#))

More than one PCBU can have a duty in relation to the same matter. These PCBU have overlapping duties – this means that the duties are shared between them.



Duties regularly overlap:

- in a shared workplace (for example, a building site or a port) where more than one business has control and influence over the work on site.
- in a contracting chain, where contractors and subcontractors provide services to a head contractor or client and do not necessarily share the same workplace.

A PCBU must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other PCBU they share duties with so that all PCBU can meet their joint responsibilities.

A PCBU cannot transfer or contract out of their duties, or pass liability to another person.

However a PCBU can make an agreement with another PCBU to fulfil specific duties. Even if this occurs, all PCBU are still responsible for meeting their legal duties.

Example

A local hotel contracts out housekeeping services to an agency. The hotel and agency both have a duty to ensure the health and safety of the housekeeping workers, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes the duty to provide first aid facilities.

The agency reaches an agreement with the hotel - if their workers need first aid while working at the hotel they can use the hotel's first aid facilities.

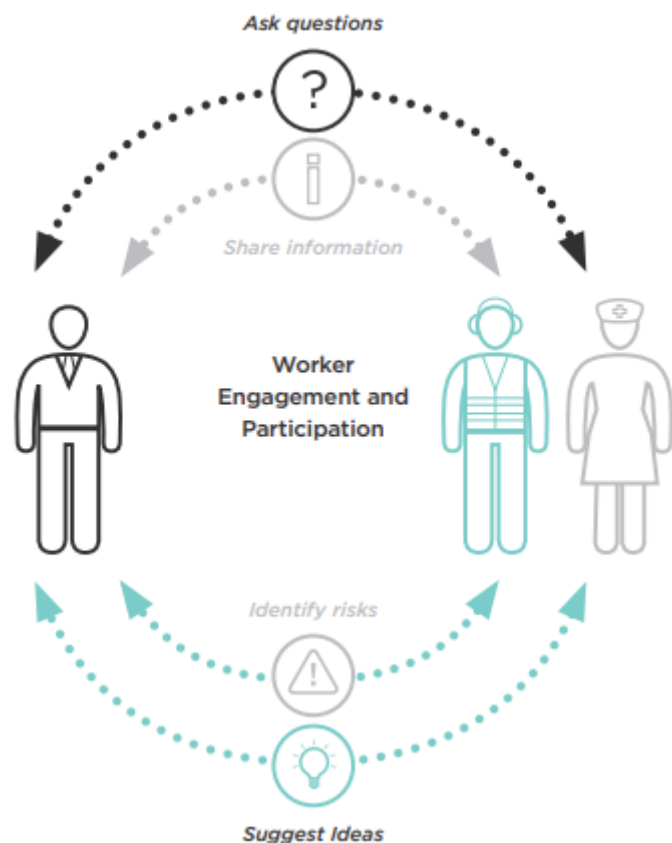
For more information, see our guidance: [Overlapping duties](#)

Appendix 4: Worker engagement, participation and representation ([Part 3 of HSWA](#))

Engage with workers and enable their participation

A PCBU has two main duties related to worker engagement and participation:

- to engage with workers on health and safety matters that affect or are likely to affect workers, so far as is reasonably practicable, and
- to have practices that give workers reasonable opportunities to participate effectively in the ongoing improvement of work health and safety.



A PCBU can engage with workers by:

- sharing information about health and safety matters so that workers are well-informed, know what is going on and can contribute to decision-making
- giving workers reasonable opportunities to have a say about health and safety matters
- listening to and considering what workers have to say at each step of the risk management process
- considering workers' views when health and safety decisions are being made
- updating workers about what decisions have been made.

A PCBU must engage with workers during specified times, including when identifying hazards and assessing risks.

A PCBU must have clear, effective, and ongoing ways for workers to suggest improvements or raise concerns.

Worker representation

Workers can be represented by a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), a union representing workers, or a person that workers authorise to represent them (for example, a community or church leader, or another trusted member of the community).

HSRs and Health and Safety Committees (HSCs) are two well-established methods of participation and representation. If workers are represented by an HSR, worker engagement must also involve that representative.

For more information

WorkSafe guidance

Good practice guidelines

[Worker engagement, participation and representation](#)

Interpretive guidelines

[Worker representation through Health and Safety Representatives and Health and Safety Committees](#)

Pamphlets

[Worker representation](#)

[Health and Safety Committees](#)

[Health and Safety Representatives](#)