



## **Occupational stress**

In order to understand the workplace health and safety requirements for occupational stress, and your obligations under the law you must consider and understand relevant legislation and codes of practice.

### What law applies

The Act, regulations, general health and safety obligations, what you must do

### About occupational stress

What is occupational stress, what is not

### Possible health outcomes of occupational stress

Occupational stress can cause illness

## What law applies

In order to understand the workplace health and safety requirements for occupational stress, and your obligations under the law you must consider and understand relevant legislation and codes of practice.

### **General health and safety obligations**

To understand your obligations and safety requirements you must be familiar with the:

*Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* which imposes obligations on people at workplaces to ensure workplace health and safety. The *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* also helps you to meet your workplace health and safety obligations through:

- The *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008* which describes what must be done to prevent or control certain hazards which cause injury, illness or death
- codes of practice, which are designed to give practical advice about ways to manage exposure to common risks. In particular, the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007* should be read in conjunction with information on PPE.

Every Queensland employer must have **workers' compensation** insurance. Most employers insure with WorkCover Queensland, while a small number of large organisations have their own insurance. This insurance coverage ensures that employees injured at work receive financial support.

### **What you must do**

It is a requirement of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* that risks must be assessed and control measures then implemented and reviewed to prevent or minimise exposure to the risks.

If the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008* describes how to prevent or minimise a risk at your workplace you **must** do what the regulation says. If there is a code of practice that describes how to prevent or minimise a risk at your workplace you **must** do what the code says or adopt and follow another way that gives the same level of protection against the risk.

If there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk at your workplace you **must** choose an appropriate way to manage exposure to the risk. People must, where there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk, take reasonable precautions and exercise proper diligence against the risk.

See the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007* for further information.

## **About occupational stress**

Stress is a term that is widely used in everyday life with most people having some appreciation about its meaning. Commonly it is believed to occur in situations where there is excessive pressure being placed on someone.

### ***What is occupational stress***

Occupational stress can be defined as the physiological and emotional responses that occur when workers perceive an imbalance between their work demands and their capability and/or resources to meet these demands.

Importantly, stress responses occur when the imbalance is such that the worker perceives they are not coping in situations where it is important to them that they cope.

### ***What is not occupational stress***

Occupational stress is not a disease. Worker's responses to stressors may be positive or negative depending on the type of demands placed on them, the amount of control they have over the situation, the amount of support they receive and the individual response of the person. In the vast majority of instances people adjust to stressors and are able to continue to perform their normal work duties.

## **Possible health outcomes of occupational stress**

In some instances when imbalance between demands and resources is too great, the prolonged activation of the stress response can lead to illness. Common health outcomes linked to stress include cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders and mental illness.