

Stress at Work

Know It

Identify It

Tackle It

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What is Stress at Work

Work-related stress is defined as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”.

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Stress at Work - the Causes

- long hours
- shiftwork
- unrealistic targets or deadlines
- too much or too little work
- lack of control and conflicting demands (especially among the lower grades)
- poor management
- bad relations with other work colleagues
- repetitive work, boredom and lack of job satisfaction

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Stress at Work - the Causes

- working alone
- job insecurity
- job or organisational change
- low pay
- jobs with heavy emotional demands
- bullying, harassment and either actual or threatened violence
- a poor working environment (such as excessive noise, the presence of dangerous materials, overcrowding, poor facilities, or extremes of temperature or humidity)

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Stress at Work - the Effects

- unusual tearfulness, irritability or aggression
- indecisiveness
- increased sickness absence
- poor timekeeping
- reduced performance, for example, an inability to concentrate
- overworking or failure to delegate
- anxiety
- depression
- panic attacks
- headaches

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Stress at Work - the Effects

- changes in behaviour
- raised blood pressure
- indigestion
- muscle tension
- increased heart rate
- erosion of self-confidence
- relationship problems, for example, becoming withdrawn or argumentative with colleagues
- increased unwillingness to co-operate or accept advice
- excessive smoking or drinking
- drug abuse

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Stress at Work - the Law

- Health and Safety at Work Act / Order – requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations - carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment
- HSE Stress Management Standards

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What Employers Should Do

- talk to their staff about work-related stress and explain what areas they want to identify
- set up a working group to help (which includes trade union safety/employee representatives, the unit health and safety officer, one or more supervisors or line managers, an HR representative and, where possible, someone from the occupational health service)
- explain that the first step is to undertake a risk assessment - a survey could be used for this purpose
- ask the group to assist in the assessment
- agree a realistic date when the key findings of the risk assessment will be available.

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Stress Risk Assessment

- Step 1.** Identify the hazards - what could cause harm and how?
- Step 2.** Decide who can be harmed - Identify people at risk who could be harmed, and how? Is anyone particularly vulnerable?
- Step 3.** Evaluate the risks
- Step 4.** Record the main findings (and implement them!)
- Step 5.** Monitor and review the effectiveness of any control measures (revise them if necessary).

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HSE Stress Standards

- **Demands** - Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- **Control** - How much say the person has in the way they do their work
- **Support** - Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships** - Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** - Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles
- **Change** - How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

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HSE Stress Indicator Tool

- 35 questions as a survey devised by the HSE without any trade union or employer bias
- Analysis of the results will give the stress working group the ability to direct resources to areas when problems arise
- Also gives pointers to good practice – so that the organisation can build on this
- Can be benchmarked via the HSE to other similar organisations

It is imperative that the working group ensures confidentiality and has committed resources to ensure that issues are identified and supported to a satisfactory conclusion

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What Branches Can Do

- Having collected the information ensure the employer lets members know the outcome of the survey and report the outcomes to your health and safety committee.
- Ensure that the implementation of the HSE Standards in your workplace is a regular item on the Health and Safety Committee agenda. The findings will be an important tool in how management, in discussion with the Committee, carries out their own risk assessment and ensures the Standards are met.
- The Committee needs to establish a programme of work to implement the Standards. If such a committee does not exist then discussions directly with the employer will be needed. If your employer is uncooperative then raise with the HSE. The implementation of the standards is still a key HSE priority and they can help.

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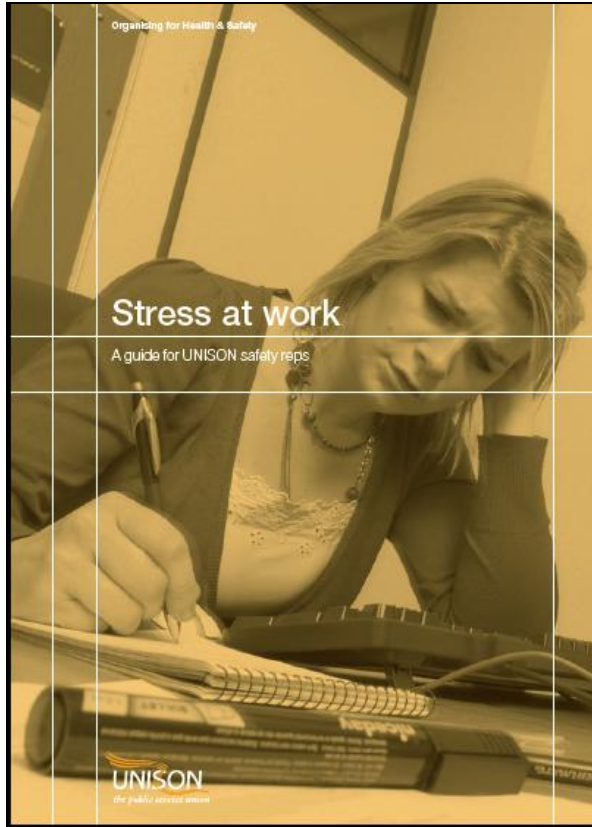
What Branches Can Do

- Talk with members about the way work can damage health
- Tackle management about their legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of employees, including risk assessing and preventing hazards at work, and about the necessity of having a stress prevention policy.
- Help any member who is suffering from stress by getting as appropriate:
 - a review of the risk assessment for the job including
 - a change of, or changes in the job
 - more training and/or more support
 - more flexibility in how the job is done
 - access to independent counseling and representation at any disciplinary or dismissal procedure.

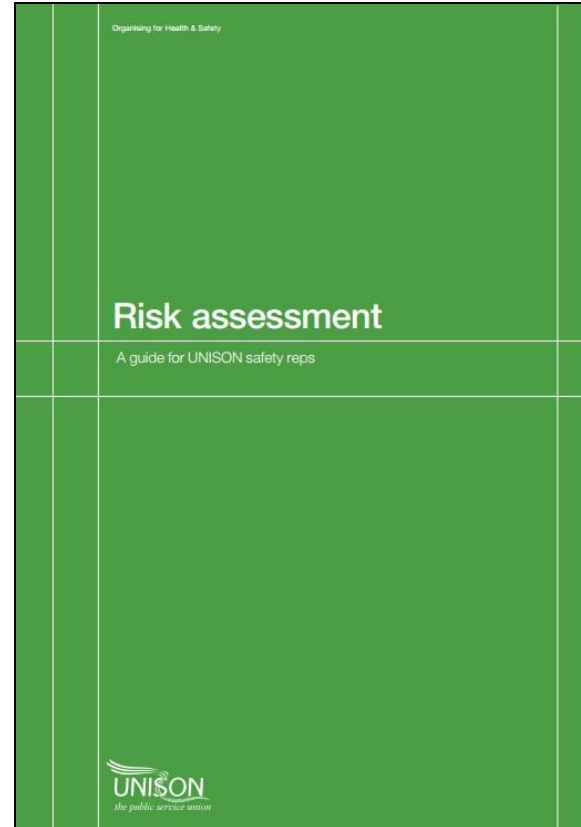
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UNISON Stress Resources



Stock No. 1725



Stock No. 1351

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HSE Stress Resources

All of the HSE's Stress resources can be found on the following webpage, including:

Support Documents

Advice on Organisational Responsibilities

Stress Indicator Tool

Stress Indicator Tool Guidelines

Benchmarking information

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

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