

Practical Tools for Developing a Resilient Workforce

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Lizz discussed the psychosocial risk factors affecting health in the workplace and, in particular, Work Related Stress – which is now being recognised as an issue for both HR and Safety professionals to tackle together.

All workers are susceptible to psychological stress, some more than others depending upon their personality and their individual tolerance levels. A certain amount of pressure is healthy – particularly if for a special event. However, relentless pressure is not.

Many factors can increase feelings of stress. For example, poor relationships with management or co-workers, lack of job control, inadequate equipment or training, excessive working hours, etc.

Failure to properly address the issue can have a major impact on a worker's long-term health and their ability to function normally. The debilitating effects can cut short a career and even increase a person's susceptibility to serious illnesses such as cancer. Additionally, the ensuing increase in the team's workload due to a worker's absence can impact on the well-being of other staff. It is important that line managers be alert to signs that an individual is not coping, such as reduced productivity and an increase in short-term sickness absence for minor complaints.

Where a worker returns after a period of work related stress absence, every effort should be made to ensure that any further risk to their health is reduced. Failure to do so will result in the company being liable to prosecution should the worker become ill again.

Cultural attitudes now need to change to remove the stigma attached to a worker who admits to being stressed. Workers should feel able to discuss their concerns without fear that they are being negatively judged by their peers and management or that they are damaging their long-term career prospects