

# *The Society of Stress Managers*

The Association for Professional Stress Managers & Life Support Managers

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(Company Registration 3707691 - Incorporated in England & Wales)

## **A STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR EMPLOYERS**

*The attached stress management policy, based upon work undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive, is offered as a model for adoption by employers following consultation with their employees and their representatives.*

### **PREAMBLE**

According to the *Health and Safety Executive* in its report, '**Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace: a Guide for Employers**', published in 1996, it was estimated that 360 million working days were lost annually in the United Kingdom at a cost of £8 billion, and that half of these absences were stress-related. In an earlier report, '**Stress at Work: a Guide for Employers**', published in 1995, the *Health and Safety Executive* had stated, "*Following this guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But, if you do follow this guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law*".

Three years later, however, in '**Help on Work-Related Stress; a Short Guide**', published in 1998, the *Health and Safety Executive* stated, "*It is your duty in law to make sure that your employees are not made ill by their work. And stress can make your employees ill. Employers who do not take stress seriously leave themselves open to compensation claims from employees who have suffered ill health from work-related stress*". In a more recent document, '**Managing Stress at Work**', published in 1999, there was a strong indication that, if such advice was not followed by employers on a voluntary basis, then the *Health and Safety Executive* would introduce a statutory **Code of Practice**, which would make employers liable to a criminal prosecution.

In the meantime, however, the *Health and Safety Executive* began to develop a strategy to tackle stress at work by setting out agreed standards of good stress management practice. In a further *Health and Safety Executive* stress management guide, '**Tackling Work-Related Stress: a manager's guide to improving and maintaining employee health and well being**', published in 2001, it was stated that these standards would cover issues connected to demands, control, support, roles, relationships and change. In 2003, the *Health and Safety Executive* did issue its

**‘Management Standards on Work Related Stress’**, together with a draft **stress management policy**. It is this draft policy which forms the basis of the attached **‘Stress Management Policy for Employers’** and the accompanying **‘Stress Management Standards for Employers’**.

## **STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **Introduction**

The employer is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees in the workplace. The employer recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. This stress management policy will apply to all employees. **Managers** will be responsible for the implementation of this policy and the employer will be responsible for providing the necessary resources in terms of staffing, training and finance.

### **Definitions of Stress**

*The Health and Safety Executive* define stress as, “*The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them*”. *The Society of Stress Managers* defines stress as, “*The reaction people have to an imbalance between the demands they perceive to be placed upon them and their resources to cope*”. Both these definitions make an important distinction between pressure and demands, which may foster a positive state of mind - if managed correctly, and stress which may be detrimental to health and safety.

### **Stress Management Policy**

1. The employer will identify all potential stressors and conduct a risk assessment to control and prevent stress in the workplace. Such risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
2. The employer will provide training for all **Managers** in good management practice designed to control and prevent stress in the workplace.
3. The employer will provide a confidential **stress management programme** for all employees affected by stress, whether such stress is caused by work or external factors.
4. The employer will provide adequate resources in terms of staffing, training and finance to enable managers to implement the employer’s agreed stress management policy.

### **Consultation**

The employer will consult with their employees through recognised **Health and Safety Representatives** on all proposed action relating to the prevention of stress in the workplace. A **Joint Health and Safety Committee** will be established to ensure

that a **stress management policy** is developed and that measures are put in place to reduce stress and promote health and safety in the workplace.

**In particular, the employer fully recognises and accepts that,**

- a) **Health and Safety Representatives** must be consulted on any changes to work practices or work design which might cause or create stress among employees;
- b) **Health and Safety Representatives** will be given adequate time to consult with employees on the issue of stress, including conducting surveys on stress in the workplace;
- c) **Health and Safety Representatives** will be fully involved in the risk assessment of stress in the workplace;
- d) **Health and Safety Representatives** will be allowed access to data and statistics collected by the employer on stress in the workplace;
- e) **Health and Safety Representatives** will be offered paid leave of absence from work to attend approved training courses on stress in the workplace;
- f) **Health and Safety Representatives** will be allowed to participate in joint inspections of the workplace at least every three months to ensure that environmental stressors in the workplace are properly monitored and controlled.

## **Responsibilities**

### **1. In general, it will be the responsibility of Managers:\***

- a) to conduct and implement the recommendations of risks assessments within their area of responsibility;
- b) to ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes taking place;
- c) to ensure employees are fully trained to undertake their duties and carry out their jobs;
- d) to ensure employees are provided with appropriate continuing professional development and training;
- e) to monitor workloads to ensure that employees are not overloaded;
- f) to monitor working hours, overtime and holidays to ensure that employees are not exceeding the **Working Time Regulations**;
- g) to attend in-service training courses, as requested, on good management practice and stress management policies and programmes;

h) to ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their area of responsibility; and

i) to be aware of, and offer additional support to, any employee who is experiencing stress outside the workplace, for example as a result of bereavement or separation.

**2. It will be the responsibility of Health and Safety Managers:\***

a) to provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress in the workplace;

b) to train and support **Managers** in implementing risk assessments for stress;

c) to support employees who have been absent from work through illness, and advise them on a planned return to work;

d) to refer employees to the employer's internal **stress management programme** or external programmes, as required;

e) to monitor and review the effectiveness of the employer's **stress management policy** and **stress management programme**;

f) to inform the employer of any changes and developments in the field of stress in the workplace.

**3. It will be the responsibility of Human Resources and Personnel Managers:\***

a) to give guidance to management and employees on the employer's **stress management policy** and **stress management programme**;

b) to monitor the effectiveness of the employer's **stress management policy** and **stress management programme** by collating statistics on absence from work;

c) to advise the employer on the requirements for continuing professional development and in-service training;

d) to provide continuing support to managers and employees in a changing environment, and encourage referral to the employer's **stress management programme**, where appropriate.

**4. It will be the responsibility of the employees:**

a) to raise issues of concern with **Managers** and/or **Health and Safety Representatives**; and

b) to accept referral to the employer's stress management programme, when recommended.

**This stress management policy has been accepted and agreed by the employer and the employees.**

**Signed by:**

**Managing Director:**

**Date:**

**Employee Representative(:**

**Date:**

***\*(It is accepted that the role and responsibilities of Managers, Health and Safety Managers, and Human Resources and Personnel Managers will vary depending on the size and resources of the particular employer).***