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Stress and Mental Health Management Policy

Introduction

We are committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and then reducing workplace stress. We will seek to control the sources of stress in the workplace so as to reduce stress levels amongst employees. We are also committed to providing such work practices, environments, and support systems to ensure that employees can maintain a positive state of mental well-being, and support should any employees suffer mental ill-health or distress.

This policy will apply to everyone in the Company. Managers are responsible for the implementation of the policy and the Company is responsible for providing all necessary resources required for its implementation.

Definition of Mental Health

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community.” Essentially, mental health concerns a person’s emotional wellbeing. If a person is suffering with mental ill health then their state of emotional well-being may be affected. Commonly diagnosed mental health conditions include stress, depression, and anxiety. Other less common mental illnesses include psychosis and schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and personality disorders.

Definition of Stress

The Health & Safety Executive defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excess pressure or other types of demand placed upon them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly and stress which can be detrimental to health.

Action by the Employer

- The company will, where appropriate, follow the Network Rail company standard NR/L2/OHS/053 Assessing the risk of stress in the workplace.
- The Company will identify the causes of workplace stress and seek to eliminate or control the risks from stress.
- The Company will provide training for all managers and supervisory employees, where required, in good management practices in relation to stress management.
- The company will utilise the mental wellbeing discussion tool to determine the level of support required in cases where stress-related ill health or mental health conditions are identified.
- The Company will provide access, where required, to confidential counselling for employees affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- The Company will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the Company’s agreed stress management strategy.

Main causes of stress

The Health & Safety Executive have identified six main causes of stress at work:

Demands

Employees often become overloaded if they cannot cope with the amount of work or the type of work they are asked to do. Most employees need a certain amount of challenge and pressure in their work as it keeps them motivated and gives them a sense of ambition. However, problems arise when this pressure becomes stressful rather than stimulating. Employees can feel overloaded by both the amount of work they are asked to do, the time they are allotted to complete the work in, the difficulty of the work they are asked to do and perhaps being asked to carry out work which is beyond their capabilities. The challenge is to get the balance right between challenging demands and stressful demands.

Control

Employees can feel disaffected and perform poorly if they have no say over how and when they do their work. If employees are to perform well it is desirable for them to have control over elements of how and when their work is done. A lack of control over their working life is one of the most common causes of stress for employees and this can lead to disaffection, alienation, and poor performance. Employees should be encouraged to give feedback and they should be involved in decision making and the way their work is carried out.

Support

Levels of sick absence often rise if employees feel they cannot talk to managers about issues that are troubling them. An organisation that has systems for providing regular and sustained levels of support to employees will be more effective and less likely to suffer the effects of stress. Employees should be encouraged to talk about the issues which are causing stress and they should clearly understand that their complaints will receive a sympathetic ear and specialist support where necessary.

Relationships

A failure to build relationships based on good behaviour and trust can lead to problems relating to discipline, grievances and bullying. Relationships are central to our experience of being at work. How well we get on with bosses, colleagues, or people we manage can have a huge impact on our physical and mental wellbeing. Both employers and employees should seek to encourage relationships based on good behaviour and respect. Employees need to know that the organisation will tackle bullying and harassment and will do everything it can to prevent it
happening in the future. The disciplinary and grievance procedures of the organisation will be respected and operated both firmly and fairly.

Role

Employees will feel anxious about their work and the organisation if they do not know what is expected of them. Stress often thrives where people do not fully understand their role in a team or section, where they are unclear about their job description or about the overall goals of the organisation. Where there are changes in an organisation the effect upon each individual must be carefully considered and explained.

Change

Change needs to be managed effectively or it can lead to huge uncertainty and insecurity. It is essential to consult with employees so they have a real input and in that way employees and employers can work together to solve problems. Change is often seen as a positive attribute associated with being competitive and flexible. Many employers have to embrace change in order to survive. Planning ahead, consulting with employees about changes and working together to identify potential problems are the keys to success.

Responsibilities

Instructions to Employees:

- Organise your work area to suit your needs.
- Ensure that the regular breaks provided by the Company are taken.
- Try to organise your work so that you perform a variety of tasks each day.
- If you do not understand what you are doing or what is expected of you, ask your Supervisor/ Line Manager immediately.
- If you feel that you are suffering from stress, ensure that you seek help and support at an early stage.
- Raise issues of concern with your Line Manager or with any senior employee whom you feel comfortable approaching to discuss your concerns.
- Accept opportunities for counselling if and when recommended.

Instructions to Managers:

- Ensure good communication between management and employees particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure employees are fully trained so as to discharge their duties and enable employees to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Be organised, plan ahead, and set realistic objectives and targets.
- Ensure that new employees have the correct experience, qualifications, skills, and training to do the job.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays and rest periods to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlements.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated
- If you are dissatisfied with an employee's performance, let them know early on. Be constructive by giving examples of best practice and suggest a way forward.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to members of employees who are experiencing stress outside of work e.g., bereavement, domestic or financial circumstances.
- Utilise the mental wellbeing discussion tool where required.

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Guidance for employees

- You are not alone if you feel very or extremely stressed. In the country as a whole as many as one in 4 people could be feeling the same way.
- Where stress relates to your workplace, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require you as an employee to tell your employer about any shortcomings in their health and safety arrangements.
- This is particularly important when tackling work-related stress – it requires a partnership between you, your manager, and your employer. This should be a partnership based on honesty and trust, where you all say what you feel.
- You can help at work by "doing your bit" for managing work related stress by talking to your employer. If they do not know there is a problem, they cannot help.
- You should support your colleagues if they are experiencing work related stress. Encourage them to talk to their manager or to any senior employee in the organisation to make sure that their difficulties are brought to the attention of the organisation.
- If you are suffering from any mental health condition or distress, please seek help from your line manager, or with any senior employee whom you feel comfortable approaching.

We are committed to providing professional support to employees who suffer from stress-related ill health and mental health conditions. Where appropriate we will be happy to arrange for counselling and other assistance to help alleviate or solve the problem. You should discuss with your manager whether it is possible to alter your job to make it less stressful for you. Try to think about the ways in which what is causing you stress at work could be changed so that you are happy to come to work in the future.

Try to channel your energy into solving the problem rather than just worrying about it. By thinking about what would make you happier at work and then discussing this with your employer everyone will be able to think about a positive way forward. Talk to family or friends about how you are feeling - they may be able to help you and provide the support you need to raise your concerns at work.

Conclusion

Remember that we are committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our employees and that we are anxious to work with you to identify the causes of workplace stress and to find solutions to those problems.

Signed
Richard Lowe
Managing Director

Dated 01/11/2026