



## The Common Psychosocial Hazards at Work

This content of this article is obvious from its title. The important questions for any business or undertaking is, “Do we have any of these common psychosocial hazards or any other psychosocial hazards in our workplace?” And have we effectively handled all psychosocial hazards in our workplace?

### What is the Definition of Psychosocial Hazard?

The NSW WHS Regulation (subclause 55A) defines psychosocial hazard as;

*“A **psychosocial hazard** is a hazard that—*

*(a) arises from, or relates to—*

- (i) the design or management of work, or*
- (ii) a work environment, or*
- (iii) plant at a workplace, or*
- (iv) workplace interactions or behaviours, and*

*(b) may cause psychological harm, whether or not it may also cause physical harm.”*

### A Detailed Explanation of Psychosocial Hazard

The SafeWork NSW Code of Practice, **Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work**, at page 6, provides more detail to the definition in the above Regulation and explains psychosocial hazards as follows;

*“Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response which in turn can lead to psychological or physical harm. These stem from:*

- *the way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised*
- *tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks*
- *the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments, and*
- *social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.*

*Psychosocial hazards and the appropriate controls will vary for every workplace and sometimes between groups of workers depending on the:*

- *organisational context to work (e.g. economic pressures, type and size of the business, organisational structure and culture, environmental conditions, technologies, and business activities, products and services, supply chains and contractual arrangements, workers’ skills and attributes and workplace relationships) and*
- *content of the work (workload, workers’ roles, responsibilities and activities required to deliver the product or service).*

*Some hazards by themselves have the potential to cause serious harm, such as experiencing occupational violence. In most circumstances, hazards will not occur alone but together with a range of psychosocial and physical hazards.*

*As part of the risk assessment process the frequency and duration of exposure to psychosocial hazards will need to be considered. The more psychosocial hazards that are present, the more likely there is for harm to occur.”*

### **Table 1 - Common Psychosocial Hazards**

On pages 7-8 of the above Code of Practice you will find some of the most common workplace psychosocial hazards. Some of the hazards in this table could be relevant to your workplace but to find all psychosocial hazards that are relevant to your workplace you will need to use a suitable hazard and risk identification process.

#### **Note**

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