

Statement of Intent

This policy is based closely on the health and safety executive publication INDG 281 (first published November 2001) i.e. the publication being available freely for reproduction within within an organisation. Errigal Contracts Ltd. acknowledges the importance of the publication in the preparation of this policy.

The HSE's belief, and ours, is that plain good management can prevent stress in the first place and that should it still occur, it can be significantly reduced through good two-way communication between, as appropriate, our directors, our technical and management team, our administration team and all of our site based staff.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for this policy ultimately lies with the Errigal Board of Directors. This includes the responsibility to ensure the provision of adequate resources for its implementation and regular assessment. Day to day implementation of the policy is the responsibility of operational management and functional heads with specialist support being provided by the Safety, Sustainability, Risk and Assurance function under the direction of its Directors.

All employees have a responsibility to comply with this policy and its associated arrangements.

Arrangements

The wording of the text that follows is generally taken directly from the HSE publication and so is written in the form of advice FROM the HSE to US, THE COMPANY. We have chosen to retain this wording as it is clear. Our staff, when reading the following questions (Q) and answers (A) can do so in the context that we, Errigal contracts Ltd. as a company and as the employer takes stress, its causes and its impacts very seriously and thus want our staff to follow the advice given in this document, without fear.

The recommended policies and procedures referred to in the following text are already in place within the company. So far, we have not found it to be necessary to provide any stress related training, other than the issue of and ensuring staff awareness of, this policy. Also, as a smaller business, we have not found it necessary to take on any external advice or services in relation to stress but we would do so if the feedback we receive from staff or our own observations or analysis indicates that this is appropriate.

Q - What is stress?

A - Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure. It isn't a disease. But if stress is intense and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill-health (e.g. depression, nervous breakdown, heart disease).

Q - But stress can be a good thing, can't it?

A - No! Being under pressure often improves performance. It can be a good thing. But when demands and pressures become excessive they lead to stress. And it's clear from the recognised symptoms of stress that it is actually bad for you.

Q - As an employer, is it my concern?

A - Yes it's your duty in law to make sure that your employees aren't made ill by their work. And stress can make your employees ill. Also, action to reduce stress can be very cost effective. The costs of stress to your organisation may show up as high staff turnover, and increase in sickness absence, reduced work performance, poor timekeeping and more customer complaints. Stress in one person can also lead to stress in staff who have to cover for their colleagues. Also, employers who don't take stress seriously may leave themselves open to compensation claims from employees who have suffered ill health from work-related stress. Fortunately, reducing stress need not cost you a lot of money.

Q - Under health and safety law, what must I do about stress?

A - Where stress caused or made worse by work could lead to ill health, you must assess the risk. A risk assessment for stress involves: looking for pressures at work that could cause high and long-lasting levels of stress; deciding who might be harmed by these; and deciding whether you are doing enough to prevent that harm if necessary, you must then take reasonable steps to deal with those pressures. You must review the assessment whenever you think that it may no longer be valid. You should make sure that you involve your employees-including trade union safety representatives where they have been appointed-at every stage of the assessment process.

Q - Isn't stress also caused by problems outside work? Are you saying I have to do something about that?

A - You are not under a legal duty to prevent ill-health caused by stress due to problems outside work, e.g. financial or domestic worries. But non-work problems can make it difficult for people to cope with the pressures of work, and their performance at work might suffer. So being understanding to staff in this position would be in your interests.

Q - Are some people more likely to suffer from stress than others?

A - We are all vulnerable to stress depending on the pressure we're under at any given time: even people who are usually very hardy. As an employer, you are responsible for making sure that work does not make your employees ill. If you notice that someone is particularly vulnerable because of their circumstances, look at how their work is organised. See if there are ways to relieve the pressure is so that they do not become excessive. However, unless you know otherwise, you could assume that all your employees are mentally capable of withstanding reasonable pressure from work.

Q - How do I recognise stress in a particular person?

A - Many of the outward signs of stress in individuals should be noticeable to managers and colleagues. Look in particular for changes in a person's mood or behaviour, such as deteriorating relationships with colleagues, irritability, indecisiveness, absenteeism or reduced performance. Those suffering from stress may also smoke or drink alcohol more than usual or even turn to drugs. They might also complain about their health: for example they may get frequent headaches.

Q - How do I find out if stress could be a problem for my firm or organisation?

A - First, take informal soundings to get some idea of what problems there might be: for example, see if your staff are disillusioned with their work. This may show up as an increase in absenteeism (especially frequent short spells of sickness), lateness, disciplinary problems or staff turnover, or a reduction in output or quality of product or service. There may, of course, be other reasons for these symptoms, but if they could be related to stress at work, get your staff to tell you about it by: bullet point talking and listening to them, you could base the discussion on the sort of pressure is mentioned in the middle of this booklet; bullet point asking them to describe the three best and the three worst aspects of their job, and whether any of these put them under uncomfortable pressure.

You can use the information you collect to identify common and persistent pressures, and who might be harmed by them.

Several 'off-the-shelf' questionnaires do the same kind of thing. These can be helpful but tend to be lengthy and may not ask the type of questions that are relevant to your organisation. Also, interpreting the findings may require specialist knowledge.

Remember to:

- Respect the confidentiality of your staff;
- Tell your staff what you plan to do with any information you collect;
- Involve them, as much as possible, in the subsequent decisions;
- Involve safety representatives, if you have them, in your plans and decisions;
- If you employ five or more staff, recalled the important findings from your risk assessment, for example by writing them down;
- Check and prosperous from time to time that the situation hasn't changed.

Q - If I do find out that stress is, or could be, a problem, what can I do about it?

A - There's no single best way of tackling work-related stress. What you do will depend on your working practices and causes of the problem. But only providing training or help (or both) for sufferers won't be enough-it won't tackle the source of the problem! The boxes in the middle of this booklet shows some of the pressures at work that might be relevant to smaller organisations, along with some suggestions about what to do.

Work related stressors

Culture

Problems that can lead to stress

- Lack of communication and consultation
- A culture of blame when things go wrong, denial of potential problems
- An expectation that people will regularly work excessively long hours or take work home with them

What management can do

- Provide opportunities for staff to contribute ideas, especially in planning and organising their own jobs
- introduce clear business objectives, good communication, and close employee involvement, particularly during periods of change
- Be honest with yourself, set a good example, and listen to and respect others
- Be approachable-create an atmosphere where people feel it is okay to talk to you about any problems they are having
- Avoid encouraging people to work excessively long hours

Demands of the job

Problems that can lead to stress

- Too much to do, too little time
- Too little/too much training for the job
- Boring or repetitive work, or too little to do
- the working environment

What management can do

- Prioritise tasks, necessary work, try to give warning of urgent or important jobs
- Make sure individuals are matched to jobs, provide training for those who need more, increase the scope of jobs for those who are over-trained
- Change the way jobs are done by moving people between jobs, giving individuals responsibility, increasing the scope of the Job, increasing the variety of tasks, giving a group of workers greater responsibility for effective performance of the group
- Make sure other are workplace hazards, such as noise, harmful substances and the threat of violence, are properly controlled

Control

Problems that can lead to stress

- Lack of control over work activities

What management can do

- Give more control to staff by enabling them to plan their own work, make decisions about how that work should be completed and how problems should be tackled

Relationships

Problems that can lead to stress

- Poor relationships with others
- bullying, racial or sexual harassment

What management can do

- Provide training in interpersonal skills
- setup effective systems to prevent bullying and harassment (i.e., a policy, agreed grievance procedures and proper investigation of complaints)

Change

Problems that can lead to stress

- Uncertainty about what is happening
- Fears about job security

What management can do

- Ensure good communication with staff
- Provide effective support for staff throughout the process

Role

Problems that can lead to stress

- Staff feeling that the job requires them to behave in conflicting ways at the same time
- confusion about how everyone fits in

What management can do

- Talk to people regularly to make sure that everyone is clear about what their job requires them to do
- make sure that everyone has clearly defined objectives and responsibilities linked to business objectives, and training on how everyone fits in

Support and the individual

Problems that can lead to stress

- Lack of support from managers and co-workers
- Not being able to balance the demands of work and life outside work

What management can do

- Support and encourage staff, even when things go wrong
- Encourage a healthy work-life balance
- See if there is scope for flexible work schedules (e.g. flexible working hours, working from home)
- Take into account that everyone is different, and try to allocate work so that everyone is working in the way that helps them work best

Remember to:

- Involve your staff and their representatives—they are certain to have good ideas you could use;
- Follow-up any changes you make to ensure that they are having the effect you intended;
- Review what you have done when you make major changes in your workplace (e.g. organisational change, new equipment, work systems or processes) to make sure that stress has not increased;
- Lead by example—as a manager, you can communicate powerful signals about the importance of avoiding stress.

Q - But why would employees want to tell me about their stress?

A - employees may be reluctant to admit they are feeling stressed by work. This is because being stressed can be seen as a sign of weakness. You can help by making it easier for your staff to discuss stress. Reassure them that the information they give you will be treated in confidence.

Q - what can I do to prevent stress from becoming a problem?

A - most of the 'things to do' boil down to good management. They are ongoing processes that need to be built into the way your organisation is run.

So that you take stress seriously, and the understanding towards people who admit to being under too much pressure.

Encourage managers to have an open and understanding attitude to what people say to them about the pressures of their work, and to look for signs of stress in their staff.

Ensure that staff have the skills, training and resources they need, so that they know what to do, are confident that they can do it and receive credit for it.

If possible, provide some scope for varying work conditions and flexibility, and for people to influence the way their jobs are done. This will increase their interest and sense of ownership.

Ensure that people are treated fairly and consistently and that bullying and harassment are not tolerated

Ensure good two-way communication, especially at times of change. Don't be afraid to listen.

Ask yourself whether you do these things. If you don't, or are unsure whether you do, take another look at the suggestions on 'what management can do' in the earlier part of this document.

Q - what should I do if an employee complains about being stressed

A - first, listen to them! If the stress is work-related:

- Try to address the source (s);
- Involve the employee in decisions;
- If necessary encourage them to seek further help through their doctor;
- If you are not their line manager, ensure that he or she treats the employee with understanding and maintains confidentiality.
- Where you can't control the work-related sources of stress, it may be appropriate to move the employee if you can. If a period of sick leave is recommended, keep in touch with the employee and their doctor. Remember that they may be able to return to work to do part of their job, work reduced hours or do a different job, before they are ready to return to their old one. Try to be flexible!
- Don't be tempted to think that firing someone provides an easy way out! If you don't act reasonably in dismissing an employee, they could claim unfair dismissal.
- Finally, bear in mind that if one of your employees is suffering from work-related stress, they may represent the tip of an iceberg. Find out whether others are also experiencing stress at work.

Q - should I be providing stress management training?

A - stress management training comes in various forms. It usually teaches people to cope better with the pressures they may come across. Because it focuses on the individual, it tends not to tackle the causes of stress at work. However, it can be useful as part of a 'bigger plan' to tackle work-related stress.

Q - should I be providing a professional counselling service or an employee assistance program?

A - a counselling service is usually paid for by employers. It provides councils to whom individuals can talk privately about their problems. An employee assistance program (E a P) can provide various services (e.g. counselling, performance management, financial advice, legal assistance). You are not under any legal obligation to provide such services. Also, because the services must protect the confidentiality of the individual, the information they can give you may not help you tackle the causes of stress at work. On the other hand, like training, they can be useful as part of a 'bigger plan', to tackle work-related stress. So, consider carefully whether such services would fit your needs and provide value for money for your organisation.

Q - do I need external consultants to help me deal with this?

A - in most cases, complex and expensive risk management procedures aren't necessary to tackle stress. Ordinary good management and regard for people may well be as effective as a high-profile approach that might be recommended by outside consultants. But if you are worried that stress is a major problem and you cannot deal with it internally, you could think about taking on an external consultant to help you. Make sure you choose them with care! Sources of help are listed below.

Q - Where can I get more information or help!

A - general advice is available from:

- InfoLine, a confidential HSE phone service. Your calls will be charged at the National call rate. Tel: 08701 545 500.
- Your local HSE inspector or the HSE Employment Medical Advisory Service (listed under Health and Safety Executive in the phone book).
- Your local authority inspector (listed under 'Local Authorities' in the phone book).
- The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) can provide information and leaflets on employment rights and good management practices (listed under 'ACAS' in the phone book).
- Chambers of Commerce can provide information and advice, consultancy services and training on a range of business-related issues, including health and safety. For details of your nearest Chamber, contact (020) 7565 2000.
- Employers' associations can sometimes provide advice on the problems that may lead to stress.
- In March 2001, the Government launched a national campaign - Mind Out For Mental Health - to combat the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health. Working Minds is the employer programme of the campaign. This part of the campaign works in partnership with employers to help improve workplace policy and practice on mental health. Visit www.mindout.net for more information.

A - advice on aspects of mental health is available from:

- The Health Development Agency, Trevelyan House, 30 Great Peter Street, London SW1P to HW (Tel: 0207 222 5300).
- The Health Education Board for Scotland, Woodburn House, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG (Tel: 0131 536 5500).
- The National Assembly for Wales, Health promotion Division – HP3, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ (Tel: 02920 825 111).

A – Information on Employee Assistance Programmes is available from:

- EAPA (UK), Premier House, 85 High Street, Witney, Oxon OX8 6LY (Tel: 0800 783 7616).

A – Advice on choosing external consultants is available from:

- The British Psychological Society, St. Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR (Tel: 0116 254 9568).

A – Also, you might like to refer to the following publications:

- Tackling work-related stress: A manager's guide to improving and maintaining employee health and well-being HSG218 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 2050 6
- Managing work-related stress: A guide for managers and teachers in schools HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1292 9 provides good general advice that isn't just relevant to those working in schools
- Mental well-being in the workplace: A resource pack for management training and development HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1524 3
- Essentials of health and safety at work HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0716 X

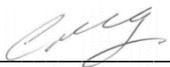
A - our leaflets Enforcement policy statement (HSE Books 2002 HSC15) and What to expect when a health and safety inspector calls (HSE Books 1998 HSC14), tell you what to expect from the HSE, and what you can do if you think the HSE has not treated you fairly.

Note: While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the references listed in the HSE publication as reproduced in this policy document, the HSE states that their future availability cannot be guaranteed.

Performance Management, Monitoring and Review

Compliance with this policy and associated BMS arrangements will be assessed as part of the Errigal active monitoring regime, including Annual Management Review. The effectiveness of quality management arrangements together with our performance against stated quality objectives is routinely monitored and reported to the Errigal Board on a regular basis. This policy and its associated arrangements will be reviewed at least annually.

Authorisation


20/01/2017
Cormac McCloskey (Construction Director)


20/01/2017
Damien Treanor (Financial Director)