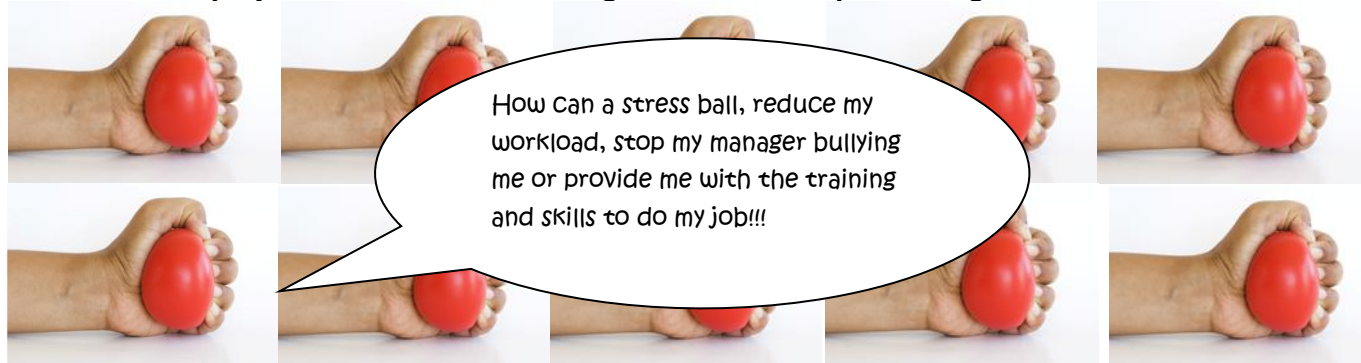




## 'Dis' Stress !!

### What is stress?

In the latest TUC safety reps survey, stress is identified as a top-five hazard by 70% of safety reps. According to the HSE, 'work-related stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work'. A new 'resilience' industry is growing which blames the worker instead of tackling the causes of stress. **Stress is the biggest cause of work-related illness and employers need to be 'encouraged' to focus on preventing it.**



### What are the effects of Stress?

Stress can cause **serious** long term effects on both physical and mental health and can cause depression. Some of the **symptoms** include butterflies in the stomach, sweating, pounding heart, increased blood pressure, muscle cramps, loss of appetite, comfort eating, weight gain or loss, indigestion, heartburn, back pain, headaches, nausea, breathlessness, fainting, impotence, fatigue, eczema, sleep problems, panic attacks, anxiety, tearfulness, paranoia, loss of concentration, anger, indecision, irritability, lack of interest in people and work, constant tiredness etc. Stress can contribute to **problems** with the heart and circulation, digestion, the immune system and mental health.

### What causes work-related stress?

The **causes** of work-related stress are often a combination of how you are **treated** by managers and employers, the way your work is **managed** and if the **demands** made on you are excessive.

### What does the law say?

There is no specific law dealing with stress, however under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** the employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and regulation 3 of the **Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations** require employers to use risk assessments to identify the hazards and evaluate the risks they pose. It is important that the risk assessment (RA) identifies the sources and causes of those risks. The RA should *prioritise collective protective measures over individual protective measures* and a coherent overall prevention policy should be developed. The HSE have developed a set of **management standards** to support employers with conducting a stress RA *and they should be used as a minimum*. The management standards cover six areas: **Demands** (i.e. workloads, work patterns, the working environment), **Control** (i.e. how much say you have in doing your job), **Support** (i.e. includes encouragement, sponsorship, resources, line management and colleagues), **Relationships** (i.e. promotion of positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour), **Role** (i.e. understanding of your role and others role), and **Change** (i.e. how organisational change is managed and communicated). For further information: [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standardsdownloads.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standardsdownloads.htm)

## I am suffering from work-related stress, what should I do?

- ✓ Tell your manager: ask for the document outlining the risks identified by the RA and the measures taken to protect you. Ask for the RA to be reviewed.
- ✓ Tell your health and safety/ trade union representative about what is happening in your workplace and what is causing you stress and ask them to take it up as a **collective issue**

## Should stress be treated as an industrial injury?

In certain circumstances, an unforeseen event at work that causes stress-related harm and consequent injury may be defined as an 'accident', and then this should be recorded in the '**accident book**'. If the employer refuses to allow this, then another option would be to write to the employer informing them of the incident, and that they were prevented from recording it in the 'accident book'. Some organisations encourage employees to record all incidents of work-related stress in the 'accident book'.

## What can the workplace committee or the branch committee do?

**Campaign** against work related stress in the workplace by:

1. Ensuring your management/employer is complying with their legal duty and if they fail to act, then an option is for the safety rep to **raise an HSE concern form**.  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>
2. Carrying out **surveys** to identify areas where stress is prevalent and map the workplace with results along with information about sickness and absence, grievances, bullying, overtime, workload, incidents and injuries etc.
3. Putting posters on the noticeboards against stress and leafletting on the issue
4. Holding meetings with workers on stress and discuss the HSE management standards
5. Carrying out workplace health and **safety inspections** with particular emphasis on questions about work related stress and supporting and encouraging **risk assessments** to be conducted where necessary
6. Ensure trade union reps are involved in the risk assessment process, to monitor and constructively criticise the process, ensure all risks are identified and proposed control measures appropriate.
7. **Meeting management** to discuss your findings of discussions, surveys or inspections and negotiating policies and procedures to ensure that stress is dealt with and the causes eliminated from your workplace. Tackling the causes of stress may need a fundamental change in the way your organisation manages work. A **mapping** exercise can show workload problems and where 'fire fighting' occurs to cover labour gaps.
8. Identify where workers are already suffering from work-related stress. Ensure employers collect and present sickness absence figures in ways that enable any absence 'hotspots' and causes are identified. Encourage everyone to **record** accurately the reasons for absence.
9. Encourage employees to **report** stress-related issues to both the union and the employer. Ensure your employer has a non-threatening procedure and environment for such reports.
10. Ensure that reps '**constructively criticise**' **assessments** to ensure they identify all the hazards, adequately assess the level of risks and ensure that they use the hierarchy of control measures.
11. Ensure that risk assessments are **reviewed** when stress related illness or absences are reported to ensure that the cause of work-related stress is being eliminated.
- 12. Keep members informed of any results of surveys or discussions with management.**

## For further information:

Hazards magazine – Distressing failure – [www.hazards.org/stress/distressingfailure.htm](http://www.hazards.org/stress/distressingfailure.htm)

Hazards magazine – Resilience – [www.hazards.org/stress/resilience.htm](http://www.hazards.org/stress/resilience.htm)

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/stress-hazards-work-book>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

[http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/q/b/B18\\_1.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/q/b/B18_1.pdf)

<https://www.google.co.uk/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=stress+risk+assessment+template+ucu> – ucu stress risk assessment toolkit

[file:///C:/Users/jnewsham/Downloads/nuj-guidelines-for-reporting-mental-health-and-death-by-suicide%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/jnewsham/Downloads/nuj-guidelines-for-reporting-mental-health-and-death-by-suicide%20(1).pdf)

Produced by Greater Manchester Hazards Centre: Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Rd, Manchester, M16 7WD Tel: 0161 636 7557 [mail@gmhazards.org.uk](mailto:mail@gmhazards.org.uk)