



5-minute safety talk

Managing Stress at Work

While many of us need a certain level of stress to achieve peak performance, too much stress can take its toll, increasing the risk of job burnout, anxiety, depression, insomnia, hypertension, and frequent illnesses. The more an organization can do to reduce stress on the job – and the more individuals can do to better manage the stress in their lives – the more productive the workplace.

There are many contributors to employee stress. Supervisors, in particular, are faced with numerous challenges, including:

- Downsizing or reorganization, often involving low morale and an unstable work environment.
- Large workloads, high performance demands and long work hours.
- 24/7 technology – e-mail, cell phones, and wireless devices make it difficult to separate work from home.
- Work/life obligations, especially in instances where there are two-career families, single-parent households, and elder care responsibilities.

Organizations can help create a less stressful work environment by applying the following practices:

- Allow workers to have some control over their schedules.
- Include their input in decision making.
- Balance responsibility with the authority necessary to complete the task.
- Set reasonable limits and timelines.
- Remember to recognize a job well done.
- Provide resources to help balance work/home issues, such as on-site/near-site child care or elder care and Employee Assistance Programs.
- Continually review policies, processes, and methods of organizing and distributing work. Make sure they are fair and effective.

Employees can better manage workplace stress by implementing the following:

- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet starting with breakfast, and get a good night's sleep.

- Volunteer time and services. Doing something for others can help a person forget their own problems and increase self-esteem.
- Seek professional help. Use employee assistance programs or participate in special therapy that can teach ways to better manage the problems that are causing stress.
- Keep moving – studies show that exercise for 30 minutes a day reduces stress.
- Learn to express your feelings – you don't have to face problems alone.
- Determine the source of the stress. If it can't be removed from your life, learn to cope by developing a systematic and rational way of thinking through the situation and taking control by figuring out options to better handle the problem.

You will never completely remove stress from your life, but identifying and managing stressors can help you maintain a positive and healthy lifestyle.

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