



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva



# Stress Prevention at Work Checkpoints



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## **Stress prevention at work checkpoints**

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# **Stress prevention at work checkpoints**

**Practical improvements for  
stress prevention in the workplace**

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International Labour Office

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## Foreword

Work-related stress is one of the most important issues in many countries and in different kinds of workplaces. Stress has many negative impacts, including circulatory and gastrointestinal diseases, other physical problems, psychosomatic and psychosocial problems, and low productivity. Increasing emphasis is being placed on improving working conditions and work organization with respect to stress at work, and on practical measures to cope with stressful work situations. Recent surveys by the ILO indicate that there are commonly applicable checkpoints for studying and reducing stress at work. It is useful to review recent international experience in this regard and develop easy-to-apply checkpoints applicable in varying situations.

It is especially important to optimize workplace conditions and work organization to prevent stress-related problems in the workplace. There are a number of practical countermeasures to such problems, which include optimizing the outer loads (stressors) at work, at home and in the community; increasing the coping ability of workers; and reinforcing support systems for workers.

This manual therefore aims at reviewing workplace stress issues. It includes easy-to-apply checkpoints for identifying stressors in working life and mitigating their harmful effects. It is hoped that workers and employers will be able to use the checkpoints to detect causes of stress at work and take effective measures to address them.

It is critical to the success of any programme on workplace stress control that the process of preventing stress be linked to risk assessment. The checkpoints in this publication represent good practice for organizations in general, but they must be linked to the specifics of the organization and to particular problems. It is important that stress not be treated differently from other risks; the employer must undertake a risk assessment from which any changes must proceed. A workplace stress prevention policy should not be a separate document, and the issue should be integrated into the overall occupational safety and health policy of the enterprise.

Tailor-made strategies and approaches must be adopted to the specific conditions of the workplace in question. The issues in a large plant in an industrialized country, for instance, may be very different from those in a manufacturing facility in a developing country.

The participation and involvement of workers, their representatives and trade unions is also essential in the prevention of stress at work. Their participation and cooperation should be embedded in the whole process of any programme on stress prevention in the workplace.

A group of experts was organized by the ILO to compile the stress prevention at work checkpoints. The group was composed of six external specialists on stress and work improvement as well as ILO staff members. Based on a one-week working meeting at ILO headquarters and subsequent email discussions, 50 checkpoints were compiled. The experts who participated in the working meeting were Jean-Pierre Brun (Canada), Anna-Lisa Elo (Finland), Tage S. Kristensen (Denmark), Kazutaka Kogi (Japan), Leanart Levi (Sweden) and Anjali Nag (India). Staff members of the ILO who participated in the meeting included Toru Itani, Claude Loiselle and David Gold. Evelyn Kortum from the World Health Organization also participated. The contributions from the meeting participants were compiled by Kazutaka Kogi, who coordinated the drafting of the present manual. The draft was reviewed by the expert members and circulated to external experts associated with international and national organizations of employers and workers. In particular the ILO wishes to thank Hugh Robertson from the Trades Union Congress of the United Kingdom, Janet Asherson from the International Employers' Organization and their colleagues for their critical and useful contributions. Technical review and editing were done by Shengli Niu, Coordinator and Senior Specialist of the Occupational Health Cluster of the ILO Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork).

This publication is much more than a manual on stress; many of its illustrations are a guide to auditing good safety and health practices which, of course, will pay dividends in minimizing stress. The publication of this document is expected to complement ILO activities aimed at improving workplace conditions and preventing stress at work in many countries around the world.

Experience and feedback on the application of the checkpoints listed here in different types of workplaces – manufacturing, information technology, agriculture and so forth – will be

extremely useful for further improvement of this publication. It is our hope that the manual will be improved and revised in the future through its trial application in different countries and industries.

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## How to use this manual

Solving stress problems at work is one of the challenges to ensuring a productive and healthy working life in both industrialized and industrializing countries. This manual has been prepared to reflect the increased necessity for measures to deal with problems causing stress in the workplace. The 50 checkpoints included here are based on the experiences of the experts who contributed to its review and preparation in implementing stress prevention in the workplace. The actions for improvement suggested by these checkpoints are also based on a number of underlying principles that have proven to be practicable and applicable in real workplaces. These principles include:

- Immediate solutions need to be developed with the active involvement of managers and workers.
- Group work is advantageous for planning and implementing practical improvements.
- Multifaceted action is necessary to ensure that improvements are sustained over time.
- Continuing action programmes are needed to create locally adjusted improvements.

The checkpoints represent simple, low-cost workplace improvements readily applicable in different working situations. As the checkpoints cover broad areas, users are encouraged to take multifaceted actions that take into account local situations.

The usefulness of an action-oriented manual containing practical checkpoints has been proved through ILO experience using the checklists of the WISE (Work Improvement in Small Enterprises) and WIND (Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development) programmes, and through feedback from the tripartite ILO constituents, professional bodies, occupational safety and health practitioners and workplace ergonomists using *Ergonomic checkpoints*, published by the ILO in collaboration with the International Ergonomics Association in 1996 and revised in 2010. The present manual is developed along the same lines.

There are three main ways of using this manual:

- applying selected checkpoints in the manual to the workplace by means of locally adapted, handy checklists;
- making ready-to-use information sheets; and
- organizing training workshops for planning and implementing immediate workplace changes.

### 1. Applying selected checkpoints to the workplace

In applying the checkpoints to a particular workplace, it is advisable to select a certain number of checkpoint items considered important to that workplace. Usually, around 20–30 items are suited for initial application of the manual. Copies of the pages corresponding to the selected checkpoint items may be distributed for use in introductory sessions on occupational safety and health, workplace interventions or work-related risk management.

Based on the selected items, a short checklist may be compiled. Such a checklist should focus on potential actions for improvement and will be more effective when it is used together with the copies of the selected pages of the manual. It is advisable to develop a locally adapted checklist, by adding several items suitable for local improvement actions.

In applying these selected checkpoints or using them for training purposes, it is useful to organize worksite walk-throughs. The short checklist can greatly help these walk-throughs, as it helps participants look afresh at the workplaces visited and find practical areas for improvement. Do not forget to ask people to find existing good points also, as these are helpful in subsequent discussions.

The results of the workplace visits should be discussed in small groups and then examined in discussions involving all participants or group representatives. The group work of people using the selected checkpoint items is essential for identifying locally practicable improvements.

It is important to look at multiple aspects of the workplace conditions. It is therefore advisable to select at least a few items from several chapters in the

manual. These can cover leadership issues, job demands, job control, social support, physical environment, working-time arrangements and work-life balance, and communication matters. Depending on local circumstances, items from other sections may also be added.

## **2. Making ready-to-use information sheets**

For preparation of information sheets, a limited number of checkpoints can be produced by making use of this manual. The simple, uniform structure of each checkpoint is beneficial for this purpose. It will be useful to revise the pages of the checkpoints by adding remarks and materials reflecting local conditions. This can be done relatively easily, as the emphasis of the manual is on simple and practical improvement options. For example, handy brochures may be created using good examples achieved locally in line with these practical options.

## **3. Organizing training workshops for immediate workplace changes**

A practical way of using the manual in training for implementation of workplace improvements designed to prevent stress is to organize short training workshops for local people in applying practical measures.

Experience in WISE training activities and similar participatory programmes has demonstrated the effectiveness of training workshops which last 1–4 days and use a good, practicable approach based on local practice. This manual can be used as guidance material in short training workshops on stress prevention at work. Such training workshops can be combined with the use of locally adapted checklists and information sheets, as described above.

Training may be facilitated with some practical hints for implementing improvements, by using a checklist based on this manual and associated information sheets. It is useful to keep in mind that practical workplace improvements can be achieved by applying the action-oriented principles promoted in this manual.

### **Here are some helpful suggestions:**

- 1.** Try to use an “action checklist” for taking a fresh look at workplace conditions. A checklist comprising selected checkpoint items in their action form can help people examine existing workplace conditions in a systematic way.
- 2.** It is highly recommended to learn from good examples of improvements achieved in local workplaces and to develop ideas for improvement in accordance with the local situation. Local examples demonstrate both the benefits gained and their feasibility. Such examples can encourage local people to take immediate actions. Further, looking at achievements rather than pointing out weaknesses always helps promote positive and constructive thinking, which leads to real improvements.
- 3.** Group discussion is always useful. It helps people exchange ideas about how to prioritize actions from different perspectives, and to balance considerations.
- 4.** It is essential, and always useful, to promote both short- and long-term plans for improvement. Ideas that can meet immediate local needs should first be put into practice on a short-term basis. Once small but effective improvements are achieved, people become confident about taking the next steps, which may need more time and resources.

An important follow-up activity is to link the positive results gained with existing occupational safety and health activities. It is important to link locally achieved positive experiences with proposals and plans for improvement. This is best done by working together on different aspects of the checkpoints in this manual. For example, in a group context, discuss and agree on three good achievements in the workplace and three points to be improved, then discuss priority actions for each, to be undertaken jointly.

# Stress prevention at work checklist

## How to use the checklist

There are 50 checkpoints in this manual. You may either use all the items or create your own list containing only those items relevant to the workplace. Usually, a checklist of about 20–30 items is suitable.

### 1. Knowing the workplace

Collect information about the main products or services provided, work methods, the number of workers (male and female), the hours of work (including breaks and overtime) and other labour issues you deem important. Depending on the local situation, additional information specific to the work area may be added by using the space provided in the Appendix at the end of the checklist.

### 2. Defining the work area to be checked

Define the work area to be checked in consultation with the manager, the representatives of the trade union and other key persons. In the case of a small enterprise, the whole work area can be checked. In the case of a large enterprise, selected work areas can be separately checked.

### 3. Initial walk-through or discussion

Read through the checklist and spend some time walking through the work area or discussing stress at work before starting to use the checklist.

### 4. Writing your check results

Read each item carefully. Mark NO or YES under “Do you propose action?”

- If the measure has already been taken properly or it is not needed, mark NO.
- If you think the measure would be worthwhile, mark YES.
- Use the space under “Remarks” to write your suggestion or note its location.

### 5. Selecting priorities

Among the items you have marked YES, choose a few which seem likely to offer the most important benefits. Mark these as PRIORITY.

### 6. Group discussion about the check results

Discuss the check results with others who have taken part in the walk-through or discussion. Agree on existing good points and on the measures to be taken on the basis of applying the checklist. Communicate with the manager and workers about the proposed measures and follow up on the implementation of these measures.

## Checklist

### Leadership and justice at work

1. Develop and communicate the workplace policy and strategies for stress prevention at work.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

2. Establish procedures to prohibit discrimination and treat workers fairly.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

3. Encourage informal communication between managers and workers, and among workers.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

4. Keep employee issues private and confidential.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

5. Address workplace problems immediately when they occur.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

### Comments on leadership and justice at work:

.....  
.....

**Job demands**

- 6. Adjust the total workload taking into account the number and capacity of workers.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 7. Rearrange work assignments to prevent excessive demands on workers.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 8. Plan the work carefully and agree on achievable deadlines or work pace.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 9. Ensure that tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 10. Provide alternative tasks to maintain attentiveness at work.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on job demands:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Job control**

- 11. Engage workers in decision-making about their work organization.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 12. Improve workers' latitude and control over the way they do their work.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 13. Organize work in such a way that new competencies, skills and knowledge are developed.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 14. Encourage the participation of workers in improving working conditions and productivity.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

- 15. Organize regular meetings to discuss workplace problems and solutions.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on job control:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Social support**

16. Establish close manager–worker relations so that workers and managers can get support from each other.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. Promote mutual help and sharing of knowledge and experience among workers.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Identify and utilize external sources for providing employee assistance.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

19. Organize social activities during or after work hours.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20. Provide help and support to workers when needed.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments on social support:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Physical environment**

21. Establish clear procedures for risk assessment and control based on existing occupational safety and health management systems.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Provide a comfortable working environment that is conducive to physical and mental health.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. Eliminate or reduce safety and health hazards at their source.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

24. Provide clean rest facilities.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Establish emergency plans to facilitate emergency operations and rapid evacuation.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments on physical environment:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Work-life balance and working time**

26. Involve workers in the design of working hours.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

27. Plan work schedules to accommodate the needs of the enterprise and the special needs of workers.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

28. Establish measures and limits to avoid excessively long working hours.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

29. Optimize working-time arrangements to allow workers to fulfil their family responsibilities.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

30. Adjust the length and frequency of breaks and rest time according to workload.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on work-life balance and working time:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Recognition at work**

31. Openly praise good work by workers and teams.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

32. Implement a system by which workers know the consequences of their work.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

33. Implement a system in which workers are able to express their feelings and opinions.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

34. Treat women and men equally.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

35. Provide good career prospects.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on recognition at work:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Protection from offensive behaviour**

36. Establish and implement an organizational framework and strategies in which offensive behaviour is prevented or dealt with promptly and adequately.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

37. Organize training in, and raise awareness of, respectable behaviour.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

38. Establish procedures and action models to deal with violence, abuse and harassment at work.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

39. Provide rapid and culturally sensitive interventions to help those involved in offensive behaviour.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

40. Organize working areas to protect workers against violence from clients and outsiders.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on protection from offensive behaviour:**

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**Job security**

41. Plan work in such a way as to enhance the possibility of stable employment.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

42. Provide a written job contract with clear statements concerning employment conditions and fair wages.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

43. Ensure that wages are paid regularly and benefits are provided according to the relevant contract.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

44. Ensure job security for workers taking parental leave.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

45. Enhance job security and protect workers and their representatives from unfair dismissal.

Do you propose action?

NO  YES  PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on job security:**

.....  
 .....  
 .....



**Information and communication**

46. Make it a rule for managers to go to the workplace and talk with the workers.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

47. Ensure that supervisors communicate easily and frequently with workers concerning any problems.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

48. Inform workers regularly about important decisions, using adequate means.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

49. Inform top management of the opinions of the workers.

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

50. Give workers information about future plans and changes.

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on information and communication:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Appendix: Additional checkpoints**

51. ....

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

52. ....

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

53. ....

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

54. ....

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

55. ....

Do you propose action?

NO     YES     PRIORITY

Remarks .....

**Comments on additional checkpoints:**

.....  
.....  
.....

---

## **Leadership and justice at work**

Leadership and justice at work are important prerequisites for addressing stress prevention at work. It is generally important to take preventive measures based on a clear policy and strategies for ensuring decent work and improving working conditions and work organization. It is essential to establish concrete procedures to deal with stress-related interventions and create a workplace climate for solving workplace problems promptly. Leadership and joint effort by managers and workers are both indispensable. The following are effective means of workplace action:

- communicating the policy and strategies for decent work;
- establishing procedures to prohibit discrimination;
- encouraging informal communication among managers and workers;
- protecting privacy; and
- addressing workplace problems promptly.

With committed leadership and justice, a workplace culture can be developed in which workplace stress prevention can be addressed in a positive manner.

---

## CHECKPOINT 1

Develop and communicate the workplace policy and strategies for stress prevention at work.

### WHY

- Stress at work is closely related to working conditions and the way work is organized. Stress prevention in the workplace should therefore be based on clear policy and strategies for ensuring decent work. It should be made clear to all workers and supervisors that joint effort is needed for continuous improvement of working conditions and work organization. Close cooperation of management and workers is required as a starting point.
- Stress prevention should be part of the workplace occupational safety and health management systems. Planning and implementation of preventive measures should be based on the assessment of risks at work and the setting of priorities for practical improvements.
- A participatory approach, actively involving managers, supervisors and workers and their organizations, is known to be most effective in reducing stress at work. Stress at work relates to multiple factors including psychosocial factors, work schedules, work methods, work environment and work–life balance. These multiple factors, requiring multifaceted interventions, are best addressed by a participatory approach. The emphasis in stress prevention at work is thus placed on participatory steps taken in multiple stress-related aspects of work.

### HOW

1. Establish a clear workplace policy in collaboration with workers and their organizations for achieving decent work in the workplace. The policy statement should state the clear commitment of management to the safety, health and well-being of workers. This policy statement should be communicated to all workers.
2. Integrate stress prevention into workplace policy and adopt joint strategies (i.e., based on a participatory approach involving managers,

supervisors and workers) on practical measures to implement the policy. The strategies should be established in line with the risk management activities carried out within the occupational safety and health management systems of the workplace.

3. Designate key persons responsible for facilitating and supporting the participatory approach taken, according to the established strategies for safety, health and well-being of workers including stress prevention at work.
4. Set concrete goals for each year, or some other predetermined period, to improve safety, health and stress prevention. Plan and implement feasible improvement actions for achieving these short-term goals through participatory steps.
5. The strategies should include evaluation and review of the actions taken and follow-up activities for continuing improvement actions.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Collect examples of good practices in terms of stress prevention in the workplace or other similar workplaces. Disseminate examples of effective measures that lead to stress reduction and improved workplace culture.
- Communicate a summary of actions taken in terms of safety, health and stress prevention in the workplace to all workers and supervisors, through meetings, notices, newsletters and e-mails.
- Discuss the effectiveness of anti-stress measures and ways to improve actions, in meetings and management–worker consultation.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Communicate to all workers and supervisors the workplace policy and strategies based on a participatory approach to ensuring decent work and stress prevention at work.



**Figure 1a. Establish a clear workplace policy stating the clear commitment of management to prevention of stress at work. This policy statement should be communicated to all workers.**



**Figure 1b. Set concrete goals each year for improving safety, health and stress prevention at work through participatory steps involving supervisors and workers.**

## CHECKPOINT 2

Establish procedures to prohibit discrimination and treat workers fairly.

### WHY

- Those working together in the workplace may have different backgrounds and capabilities. It is important to treat all workers fairly and with respect. There should be an open workplace policy that all workers are treated equally irrespective of their gender, race, religion or beliefs. By eliminating discrimination, a healthy workplace culture can be established. Such a non-discriminatory, open policy will provide a good basis for stress prevention in the workplace.
- Discriminatory measures and unfair treatment are major stressors at work. Job assignment, career development, workload and work organization should be arranged fairly to avoid discrimination. Equal opportunities for both women and men are essential. Consistent, joint effort is indispensable in achieving this goal.
- Clear anti-discrimination procedures and proper measures and actions to deal with complaints will ameliorate or even eliminate stressful conditions and prevent stress at work. It should be noted that some workplace conflicts occur due to the discriminatory actions of certain managers, supervisors or workers. Such procedures should be specified in the workplace policy against discrimination.

### HOW

1. Establish workplace procedures to prohibit discrimination in the workplace. These procedures should aim at workplace equity and fair treatment. They should ensure that fairness is maintained in the allocation of jobs, duties, promotion, benefits and other terms or conditions of employment. In particular, employment-related distinctions on the basis of age, race, sex, disability, national origin or religion must be prohibited. Actions in breach of the equity policy should be reported as soon as they are discovered and stopped before they lead to a serious situation.

2. Communicate to all managers, supervisors and workers the policy of workplace equity and the procedures to prohibit any discriminatory measures and actions.
3. Procedures for maintaining privacy in the process of dealing with cases of discriminatory action should also be incorporated. This should not hamper or delay the correction of discriminatory measures in the workplace.
4. Assign a staff member to whom workers can report when they receive unequal or unfair treatment. Make sure that each case is dealt with promptly and fairly.
5. Pay particular attention to the fair distribution of work tasks. It is necessary to communicate the importance of fair distribution to all managers, supervisors and workers, and follow it up in a coherent manner.

### SOME MORE HINTS

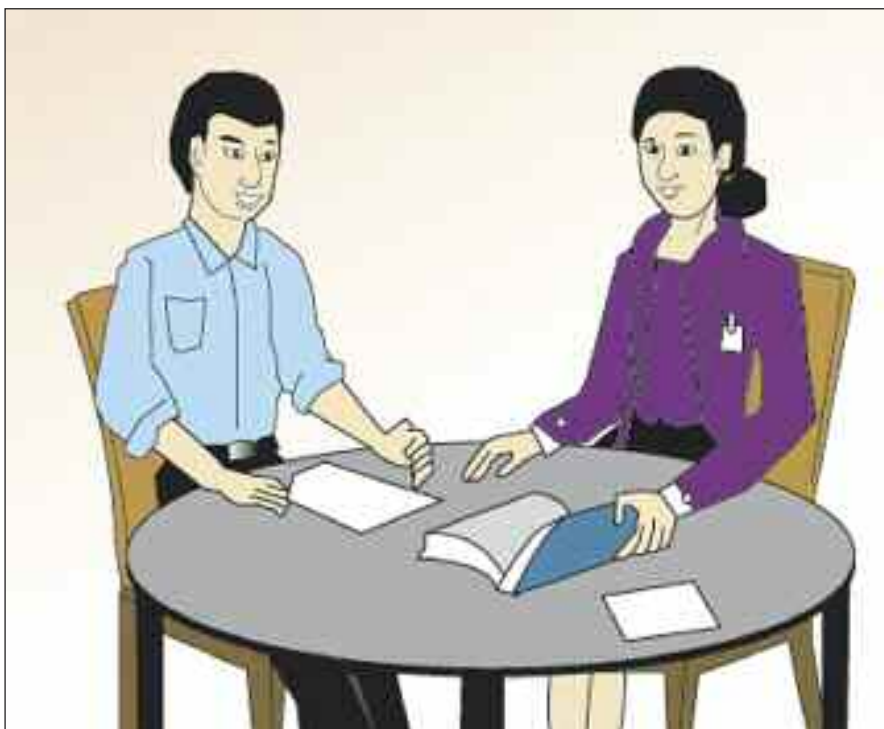
- As part of the workplace culture, treat all workers equally. It is essential to be coherent in workplace equity and fair treatment for all.
- Be quick to admit mistakes, especially when unfair treatment or discrimination have occurred on the part of management.
- Suggestions about fair treatment and complaints about discrimination from workers should be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. This helps develop workplace equity with the cooperation of all managers and workers.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

By establishing clear procedures to prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, race, sex, disability, national origin or religion, a workplace culture in support of decent work can be effectively established.



**Figure 2a. Communicate to all managers, supervisors and workers the policy of workplace equity and the procedures to prohibit any discriminatory actions.**



**Figure 2b. Assign a staff member to whom workers can report when they receive unequal or unfair treatment. Each case must be dealt with promptly and fairly.**

## CHECKPOINT 3

Encourage informal communication between managers and workers, and among workers.

### WHY

- Cooperation between managers and workers is promoted by frequent, informal communication – through personal talks and joint activities, for example. Informal meetings, parties, sports events, excursions and other joint activities are relevant occasions which not only improve personal relations and cooperation but also facilitate informal communication on stress prevention at work.
- Informal communication improves mutual understanding through discussion about common work–life issues. This helps develop partnerships, whether between managers and workers or among workers.
- Likewise, joint planning and execution of informal activities promotes intimate communication and companionship. Joint experience will more likely lead to effective cooperation and implementation of measures related to work stress.

### HOW

1. Encourage informal talks between managers and workers. Managers and workers should be able to communicate freely on different occasions both during and outside work hours. Managers, on their part, should make it clear that they are open to discussion and would like to have good relations with workers.
2. Encourage the development of informal relations among workers as well. Informal talks and chats may take place on appropriate occasions. Workers naturally have close mutual contacts in and outside work hours, and these informal relations can be developed further through joint participation in various meetings and training activities.
3. Provide support for the organization of informal gatherings and events involving managers and workers or groups of workers, such as parties, sports events, excursions, competitions and other

activities. Where appropriate, some of these may be held during work hours.

4. Disseminate information about informal gatherings and events through various means. It will help if you make it clear that informal communication is encouraged as part of workplace policy.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Where appropriate, openly take the initiative to organize informal gatherings or events.
- Provide occasions for informal chat between managers and workers, after formal meetings or between business activities, for example.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Encourage informal communication between managers and workers, and among workers, taking advantage of various occasions and events, both during and outside work hours.



**Figure 3a. Encourage informal talks between managers and workers both during and outside work hours.**



**Figure 3b. Provide support for the organization of informal gatherings of various types between managers and workers, and among workers.**



## CHECKPOINT 4

Keep employee issues private and confidential.

### WHY

- Protection of privacy in dealing with personal confidential information is critically important. Lack of confidentiality in dealing with personal information, health conditions and stress-related issues has significant impacts on the well-being and health of the workers concerned. A clear workplace policy for protection of privacy must be established and respected by all.
- Protection of privacy is essential to the success of any activities to prevent stress at work. The utmost care must be taken in maintaining privacy in respect of health-related information and confidential information on those who are victims of stress, offensive behaviour or discrimination in the workplace.
- Protection of privacy in dealing with health and stress-related disorders, or personal matters, will be adversely affected if there is insufficient clarity in the workplace policy on privacy protection. Often, staff members who are not health professionals may happen to be dealing with privacy-related information. It is therefore very important to establish procedures to deal with people's confidential information.

### HOW

1. Establish a clear workplace policy on protecting privacy when dealing with personal confidential information, both in everyday business and in health- and stress-related matters. This policy should be made known to all in the workplace.
2. Establish and maintain procedures to deal with personal confidential information, including personal history and information on performance, health conditions and stress-related issues.
3. Take the utmost care with confidential information in the form of reports and personal files containing information about health conditions and other stress-

related issues. Measures should be taken to safeguard the information. Consult services dealing with personal health or stress problems as a measure to ensure strict protection of privacy.

4. Establish and maintain procedures for dealing with electronic data concerning personal information, health conditions and stress-related issues. These procedures must be in line with the workplace policy on privacy protection and include measures to prevent accidental leakage of information and prohibit unauthorized access.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Learn from examples of effective privacy protection programmes in the workplace. As privacy is critical in workplace stress prevention activities, good examples help protect privacy in similar situations.
- In cooperating with external institutions or programmes such as employee assistance programmes (EAPs), extra care should be taken to protect the privacy of workers concerned when proceeding with joint activities.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Establish procedures for dealing with personal confidential information, including electronic data, and take the utmost care in keeping it safe.



**Figure 4a. Establish procedures to deal with personal confidential data and information, including personal history and information on performance, health conditions and stress-related issues.**



**Figure 4b. Explain to the worker how personal and health data are related in a prudent manner, so as to ensure confidentiality and the protection of privacy.**

## CHECKPOINT 5

Address workplace problems immediately when they occur.

### WHY

- Various problems arise in the workplace. They include problems related to business operation, personnel management issues, and the safety and health of workers, as well as personal conflicts and stress-related issues. It is important to establish a workplace climate to immediately deal with such problems.
- Some of these problems may act as stressors for certain workers or affect stress prevention activities. Care should be taken to solve the problems as promptly as possible and mitigate the stress affecting these workers.
- Close cooperation between managers and workers is usually necessary to address such workplace problems. Prompt and adequate efforts to solve problems, with the cooperation of relevant people, are good for workplace climate and have a positive impact on stress prevention at work.

### HOW

1. Examine recent workplace problems to determine whether they were dealt with appropriately and promptly. They may have given rise to positive experiences or resulted in drawbacks. Discuss what lessons can be drawn from recent experiences.
2. Make it routine practice to address workplace problems as soon as they occur.
3. When problems arise that may act as stressors on some workers, address them promptly and, at the same time, provide support for the affected workers.
4. If technical advice is needed for the solution of problems, obtain such advice and support from specialists or external assistance services.
5. If appropriate, discuss feasible options for solving the problems with key people such as the responsible supervisors, the workers concerned and

their representatives, and occupational safety and health personnel. It is necessary to take into account feedback obtained from all those concerned.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Make sure that workers know that they should report any problems when they occur and participate in solving them.
- Any bottleneck in solving a problem probably results from a combination of factors. This requires planning several actions at the same time. It is important to apply a set of solutions rather than a single solution.
- Pay due attention to the privacy of people involved, and treat personal data and other confidential information according to established procedures for protection of privacy.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

By addressing workplace problems promptly when they occur, a workplace climate can be created for dealing effectively with stress at work.



**Figure 5a. Make it routine practice to address workplace problems when they occur, including those related to safety, work operations or stress at work**



**Figure 5b. Discuss feasible options for solving the problems with key people such as the responsible supervisors, the workers concerned and their representatives, and occupational safety and health personnel.**



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## Job demands

Job demands need to be assigned among workers in a balanced manner. Excessive job demands affecting particular workers must be avoided to prevent stress at work. Undue time pressure due to difficult-to-meet deadlines should be prevented. Good performance and well-being depends on the workload being adjusted to individual workers within a team. This requires close cooperation between managers and workers. Practical measures that can be taken to make improvements in this area may include:

- adjusting the total workload;
  - preventing excessive demands per worker;
  - planning achievable deadlines;
  - clearly defining tasks and responsibilities;
  - avoiding under-utilizing the capabilities of workers.
-

## CHECKPOINT 6

Adjust the total workload taking into account the number and capacity of workers.

### WHY

- Good performance and well-being depend on a workload adjusted to individual workers within a team. Good managers know the types and demands of the work their workers are performing.
- Overloaded workers experience fatigue, loss of concentration, a feeling of being overwhelmed, and stress.
- Be careful: workload is not only a question of quantity or physical demand. It is also a qualitative matter of concentration, vigilance, overlapping of tasks, human relations and so forth.
- Undue workload means being overloaded, lacking sufficient time to do the job or having to work too fast, for example, by setting aside the quality of the work and having no chance to recuperate.
- Realistic adjustment of workload thus maintains good performance and leads to customer satisfaction.

### HOW

1. Assess individual and team workloads through observation and discussion with workers to determine whether change is necessary and feasible.
2. Adjust the amount of work per worker to avoid any worker being overloaded. Work should be able to be performed without difficulty and to quality standards within the deadline. Take into account individual differences and adjust workloads accordingly.
3. Add workers when and where it is necessary.
4. Reduce unnecessary tasks such as control operations, writing reports, filling in forms or registration work. These activities have a significant impact on workers' concentration. Instruct workers

about the correct use of their tools. Have them ask for repair or replacement when tools are damaged or worn out.

5. Reduce ineffective interruptions which break workers' concentration and interfere with production or service objectives.
6. Change the work process to facilitate the completion of work requirements, for example, by reviewing the distribution of tasks or using innovative approaches and technology.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Improve working conditions and work organization to fully utilize the capacities of workers.
- Train workers to develop their competencies and skills.
- Plan appropriate deadlines to achieve better distribution of the workload in a reasonable period of time.
- Encourage regular discussions about workload between supervisors and workers.
- Plan, review and adjust present and future workload levels to increase performance and maintain a healthy workforce.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Adjust the workloads of individual workers. Appropriate workloads help improve workers' performance and health.



**Figure 6a.** Adjust the amount of work per worker to avoid any worker being overloaded. Improve workstations and workflow from ergonomic points of view.



**Figure 6b.** Allocate work to a group of workers so that the workload is shared by good teamwork.



## CHECKPOINT 7

Rearrange work assignment to prevent excessive demands on workers.

### WHY

- When various workers do not have the same amount of work (some being overloaded and others under-utilized), there is a problem of unbalanced distribution of work.
- If the distribution of work is unequal and unfair, there is a risk of exhausting your best workers and under-stimulating the others. Productivity may decline.
- Good distribution of workloads has a positive impact on productivity and workers' well-being.
- Workers will have higher motivation to do good work if the work is distributed equally and fairly.

### HOW

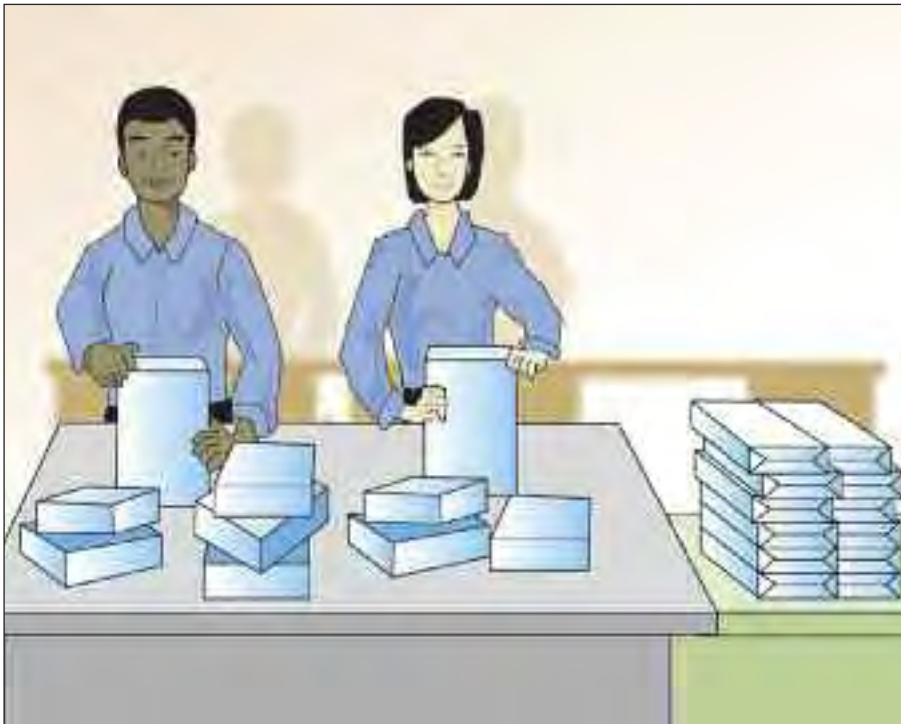
1. Observe the work being done, talk to the workers to determine whether work is equally and fairly distributed and, if some workers are overloaded or have tasks which are too difficult, find solutions.
2. Take into consideration that some workers may have tasks that are too easy or have too little challenge in their work.
3. Revise job assignment to ensure that workers receive an equitable amount of work, taking into account individual workers' capacities.
4. Rotate difficult and challenging work among co-workers.
5. Improve work methods or equipment for overloaded workers, and relieve their workload.
6. Involve workers in group discussion when redesigning work assignment. This is good practice for finding efficient and durable solutions.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Remember that workers are individuals with different capacities and health conditions, so it is appropriate, in some situations, for work to be not equally, but fairly, distributed.
- Maintain confidentiality concerning workers' health issues.
- Protect the health of the unborn child by avoiding work overload for pregnant women.
- Balanced work assignment is a good way to improve and develop workers' skills and performance.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Good distribution of work should be part of management practice because it will promote the well-being and productivity of workers.



**Figure 7a.** Observe the work being done and discuss with workers how to share difficult tasks and avoid overload on particular individuals.



**Figure 7b.** Involve workers in improving difficult or uninteresting tasks to make it easier to assign tasks, rotate workers and make effective workplans.

## CHECKPOINT 8

Plan the work carefully and agree on achievable deadlines or work pace.

### WHY

- Workload is dependent on deadlines and work pace. Deadlines have an impact on the intensity of work, the quality of production and the well-being of workers.
- Working frequently under short deadlines is known to be associated with stress-related disorders related to work.
- It is appropriate to set realistic deadlines to avoid time pressure, errors and irritation.
- Deadlines can be changed and resources can be adjusted to demands.
- Workers should be consulted on the establishment of deadlines because they have the expertise to assess the time needed to do a job and the limitations of the work process.

### HOW

1. Always negotiate and plan deadlines with the customers, managers and workers, taking into account available resources and work capacities. Do not hesitate to rearrange deadlines if conditions in the workplace change.
2. Plan your work calendar regularly to avoid deadlines which are too short.
3. Provide a buffer before and after each task in fast-paced work or customer service.
4. Train managers and workers to deal with deadlines and fast-paced work better.
5. Consider working conditions, technical resources, potential changes and workers' special needs when you negotiate deadlines.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- A realistic deadline is one of the good indicators of organizational performance. When the feasibility of a deadline is in doubt, organize group work and involve supervisors and workers.
- Unrealistic deadlines decrease commitment and motivation.
- Provide the resources necessary to meet realistic deadlines.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Managing and planning realistic deadlines is good for the well-being and productivity of workers.



**Figure 8. Plan your deadlines regularly with the customers, managers and workers, taking into account your available resources.**

## CHECKPOINT 9

Ensure that tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined.

### WHY

- When a worker has poorly defined tasks and unclear responsibilities, it is difficult to determine their optimum level of productivity and the limit above which they will be overloaded. As a result, work organization will be less effective because it will often be improvised.
- Clearly-defined tasks increase a worker's productivity and improve organization within the work team.
- When each worker's responsibilities are clear, work makes more sense to the worker, and this reduces the risk of low-quality outputs.
- Clearly defined responsibilities and work tasks also improve worker–manager relations.
- The clear definition of tasks and responsibilities is an essential management practice to avoid errors, incidents and occupational injuries.

### HOW

1. A good work description must include clearly defined tasks, responsibilities, effort required and goals to be achieved. It should also identify the immediate supervisor, support available to the worker and working conditions (schedule, travel, etc.).
2. In developing a work description, particular attention should be paid to task conflicts (e.g., quality vs. quantity).
3. A good work description must identify not only physical risks but also any risks that could increase stress for the worker.
4. A clear description of tasks and responsibilities allows the right person in the right job to be motivated. It thus avoids exposing certain workers to constraints which they have neither the skills nor the abilities to deal with.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Descriptions of tasks and responsibilities should be reviewed regularly and also when working conditions change.
- To be more effective and better correspond to the actual requirements of work, workers' training should be tailor made in accordance with the specific descriptions of tasks and responsibilities.
- A good work description will also provide information about what the other members of the work team do, which encourages teamwork.
- A good work description can help to determine the responsibility of a worker in the event of accident or injury, which has a significant impact on the compensation and welfare of the worker concerned.
- A specific work description is important, but it should also incorporate some flexibility to allow for changes in work methods or work organization.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

A clear description of tasks and responsibilities can improve workload distribution among individual workers and the work team.



**Figure 9a. Clear specification of tasks and responsibilities leads to motivated work and good quality results.**



**Figure 9b. Good work descriptions provide knowledge about what the other members of the work team do and therefore increase understanding of team goals and teamwork. This knowledge helps the team meet sudden changes in work organization.**

## CHECKPOINT 10

Provide alternative tasks to maintain attentiveness at work.

### WHY

- Some jobs under-utilize the capacities of workers or are too easy (e.g., control room, building surveillance, etc.). A lack of sufficient challenge at work can create psychological distress and boredom among those in such jobs.
- A productive work day has a positive effect on a worker's health. Work days during which the worker is rarely stimulated are demotivating and make them lose interest in work.
- When workers are kept busy with their work, they will have the real impression that they are contributing to the firm's performance. It is useful to ensure that workers are assigned meaningful tasks which are conducive to maintaining their interest and attentiveness at work.

### HOW

1. In collaboration with workers, identify tasks that provide individual workers with greater stimulation and prevent boredom or reduced concentration.
2. Establish work arrangements which involve a variety of tasks rather than a single repetitive task.
3. Tasks carried out by a worker can be enriched by simply giving the worker more autonomy.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Workers should be given additional meaningful tasks rather than a greater quantity of repetitive tasks.
- Discuss with workers assigning them meaningful tasks and avoiding tasks which are too simple, repetitive or monotonous. Examine ways to avoid or improve these tasks by involving the work team members.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Under-utilization of a worker is also a source of stress. Provide meaningful tasks for each individual worker.



**Figure 10a. Assign meaningful tasks to a work team to facilitate the rotation of jobs among team members.**



**Figure 10b. Organize work so that it involves a variety of tasks to be accomplished by a worker, rather than a single, repetitive task**





## Job control

When workers can control how they do their work, they will enjoy working and be more productive. Engaging workers in the decision-making process about their work organization is important in stress prevention at work. Work becomes more stressful when workers have no influence on the pace of work and working methods. Increasing workers' latitude and allowing them control over their work helps increase motivation and work quality and reduce stress. Effective measures include:

- engaging workers in decision-making about work organization;
- increasing workers' latitude and control over their work;
- organizing work so that new skills and knowledge are developed;
- encouraging the participation of workers in improving work;
- organizing regular meetings to discuss workplace problems.

Workers who are able to decide how and when their work is done can better mobilize their skills and experience, and are more productive. Increased control over work thus results in more effective work organization.

## CHECKPOINT 11

Engage workers in decision-making about their work organization.

### WHY

- Workers will enjoy their work more and be more productive if they can control how they do it.
- Workers may be more knowledgeable than others about the work process and therefore their suggestions for improvement may result in more effective work organization and higher productivity.
- Engaging workers in the decision-making process about their work organization may increase workers' self-esteem.

### HOW

1. Ensure that workers make suggestions or influence changes to work organization.
2. Examine how work organization is set up and where it might be improved. Then organize group discussion about how workers can be more actively involved in continually improving work organization.
3. When and where possible, allow workers to determine:
  - how work is performed;
  - the working schedule;
  - whom they work with;
  - whether it is possible to work in small groups;
  - the choice of tools, equipment, furniture, etc.
4. Encourage workers to present their ideas about improving their work organization through brief suggestion sessions or by organizing small group discussions.
5. Keep records of all the changes to work organization, and evaluate them regularly.
6. Make proposals and contributions known to all workers as well as the results of the implementation of such proposals. This will encourage further participation.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Involve workers in the decision-making process.
- Consider providing workers with increased mobility so they can learn different jobs and have different experiences, giving them opportunities to participate in decision-making about the work organization and the working conditions and environment.
- Discuss with workers the different measures being considered to change the work organization and the working environment.
- Provide information and training that will help workers participate in the decision-making process.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Involving workers in the decision-making process about working conditions and work organization will increase workers' self-esteem and, at the same time, lead to decisions that have a broad base of support.



**Figure 11a. Involve workers and supervisors in examining and improving work organization, learning from good examples.**



**Figure 11b. Encourage workers to present their ideas about improving their work organization by organizing small group discussions.**

## CHECKPOINT 12

Improve workers' latitude and control over the way they do their work.

### WHY

- When workers can decide how and when their work is done (for example, in relation to working methods and pace), they actively mobilize their skills and experience and are more likely to be highly motivated at work. Increasing latitude and control of work is important in preventing stress.
- Through experience, workers usually know well how to maintain the quality of their work and avoid mistakes, particularly when they can organize their own way of completing assigned tasks. Workers will enjoy working and feel less stress if they can influence and control their own situation at work.
- Work is often done by a work team. When team members jointly decide how different tasks are to be assigned and completed, they can work in a collaborative manner and produce good results. This is far less stressful than when each worker is obliged to repeat fragmented tasks according to the pace of machines and within very short deadlines.

### HOW

1. Plan the work tasks for a group of workers so that each worker or each subgroup can decide how, in which sequence and when the tasks will be done. This is better than assigning to each worker or subgroup fragmented tasks to be completed at a predetermined pace.
2. Hold brief meetings of the whole work group or team to jointly plan individual work assignments and time schedules. These can be held daily at the beginning of work or at regular intervals during the working week, the month or some other time, until the deadline is met.
3. Allow workers in the work group or team to influence the choice of tools, equipment, furniture and work methods. Group discussion is useful in achieving this and reaching feasible decisions.

4. Rearrange the work process so that individual workers or subgroups of workers can control the pace of work and execution of tasks.
5. Form autonomous work teams by assigning each team the responsibility to decide how to do the work.
6. Encourage workers to propose ideas about the way work is done within a group, section or team. Organize group discussion to rearrange work methods, taking into account the proposed ideas and other practicable options.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Collect good examples of autonomous work teams with information about changes made and their positive results. Disseminate these examples through notices on billboards, newsletters, leaflets and e-mails.
- With the participation of workers, evaluate the achievements of those work teams which have latitude and control over the way their work is done.
- Show appreciation for the initiatives of individual workers and work teams about work methods and autonomous procedures.
- Provide learning opportunities for workers to upgrade their knowledge and skills about their work tasks and autonomous ways of working.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Workers should be able to influence the way their work is performed and the quality of their results. Increased latitude and control over work greatly increases motivation and work quality, and reduces stress at work.



**Figure 12a.** Plan the work tasks for a group of workers so that each worker or subgroup can decide how, in which sequence and when the tasks are done.



**Figure 12b.** Form autonomous work teams by assigning each team the responsibility to decide how to do the work.

## CHECKPOINT 13

Organize work in such a way that new competencies, skills and knowledge are developed.

### WHY

- A worker who is dynamic and can perform multiple tasks will be more productive and will be able to support other workers.
- By providing opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills, workers will be stimulated and have an increased capacity for decision-making.
- With new competencies, skills and knowledge a worker can rotate to different jobs, allowing for the temporary replacement of absent workers.
- Participation in such capacity-building activities also encourages social support among workers.

### HOW

1. Plan the work so as to allow workers to engage, during working hours, in training and educational opportunities funded by the employer and linked to the job.
2. Provide workers with opportunities to learn new competencies, skills and knowledge through on-the-job or external training.
3. Meet with workers and ask them what competencies, knowledge and skills could be learned to improve the working environment and productivity.
4. Once a worker has accessed training or learning opportunities, reorganize the work – for example, by exchanging tasks or sharing work – so they can use their new knowledge and skills.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Developing short, work-related training modules which can be integrated into the working day will allow workers to develop new knowledge and skills without having to leave the workplace.

- As workers are adult learners, ensure that training opportunities are highly participative and relevant.
- Regularly evaluate training and educational opportunities to make sure that realistic objectives are established and met.
- If it is not possible to organize continuing training internally, consider making use of opportunities offered by outside institutions.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Workers with new knowledge, competencies and skills are not only more efficient and productive but will be stimulated to contribute more to group activities and cross-training in the workplace.



**Figure 13a. Provide workers with opportunities to learn new competencies, skills and knowledge through on-the-job training.**



**Figure 13b. Use good visual examples to assist workers to learn new skills and knowledge.**



## CHECKPOINT 14

Encourage the participation of workers in improving working conditions and productivity.

### WHY

- When work demands are high and workers have limited or no control over their work, the potential for stress increases.
- Workers can feel more in control if they are able to participate in the decision-making process.
- Workers are probably the most knowledgeable about their workstations and tasks. Their involvement in planning and carrying out changes to these conditions can lead to useful improvements in productivity which might not otherwise be achievable.

### HOW

1. Create work processes in which workers can control their own work pace and execution of tasks.
2. Determine the extent to which workers are involved in the design and planning of work. Organize discussions on how they can be more actively involved in work organizational issues such as work methods, pace and pauses.
3. Where possible, in consultation with management, allow workers to:
  - jointly plan work assignments and time schedules;
  - determine the method, speed, cycle and sequencing of work;
  - determine where the work is done.
4. Through small group discussions, allow workers to influence the choice of tools, equipment and furniture.
5. Establish a process whereby workers and managers can jointly discuss means of improving the working environment along with productivity.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Urge workers to take responsibility for the work process, working conditions and productivity.
- Allow workers to control such work features as task assignment, pacing, priority and sequencing of individual work.
- Encourage workers to report challenges in working procedures and also assist in searching for solutions to such problems.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

A key to reducing stress at work is to allow workers to have more control over their work and working conditions.



Figure 14. Organize group discussions on the design and planning of work, including work methods, pace and schedules.

## CHECKPOINT 15

Organize regular meetings to discuss workplace problems and solutions.

### WHY

- Workers can provide a great deal of positive input to the solution of problems and play an important role in their practical application.
- Solutions proposed by workers tend to be inexpensive, practical and easy to implement.
- Where there is provision for meetings of task teams, workers feel more in control, which may translate into less stress and greater productivity.
- Workers have the expertise to assess the time and resources necessary for a job or task to be completed. When there are constraints and problems, they are in a unique position to offer realistic solutions.

### HOW

1. Schedule regular meetings for workers to outline problems related to their work and suggest possible solutions.
2. Form a small working group which would ask workers and supervisors to develop solutions to workplace problems.
3. The working group may need information or technical advice to resolve a problem. Provide adequate support, information and technical advice if needed.
4. Once the working group has completed its work, request feedback on the solutions it has proposed from all workers, managers and supervisors involved in the process.

## SOME MORE HINTS

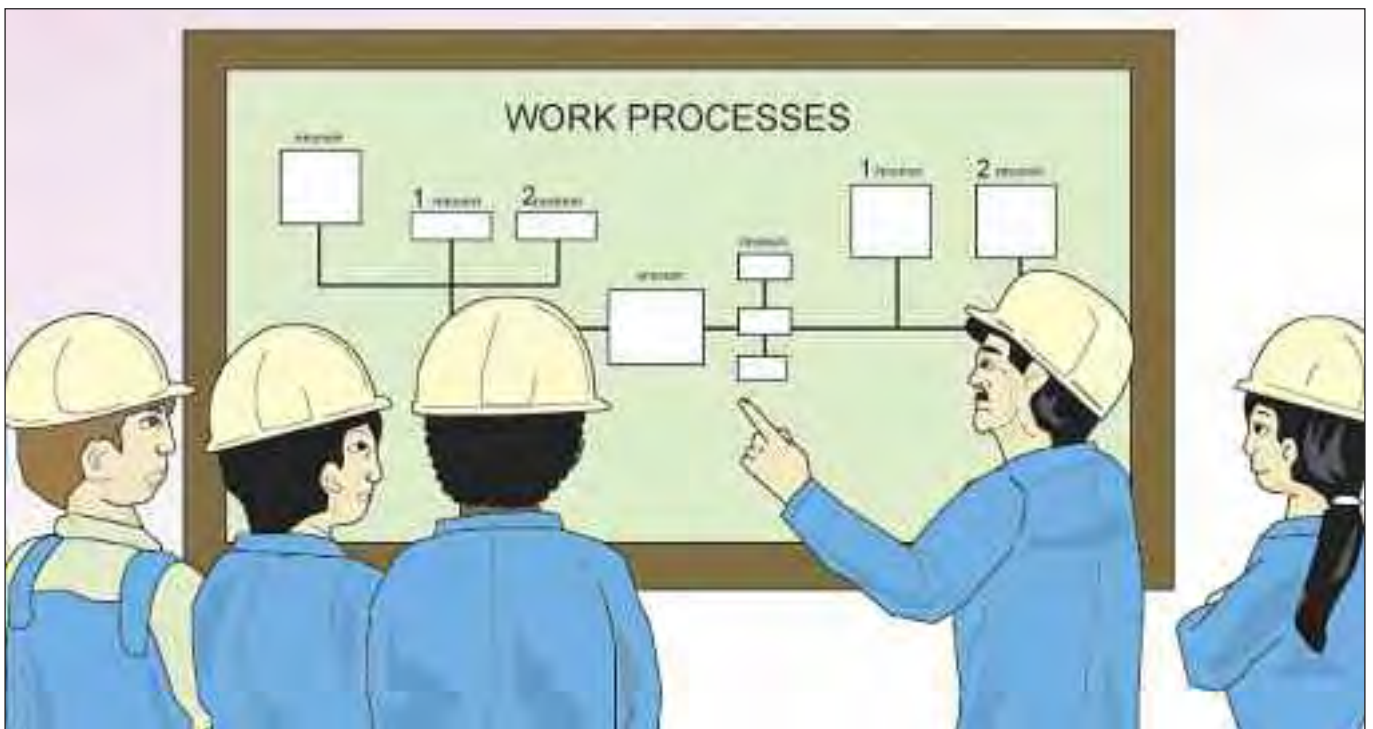
- Organizing a group of workers and supervisors to address a specific problem is productive and will address the problem from different perspectives.
- If workers know that they may be able to participate in a working group on a problem related to their work, they may be more ready to report work problems and seek solutions.
- The working group should be ready to seek the advice of others who have experienced in solving similar problems.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Involving workers in solving problems may lead to rapid, inexpensive and effective solutions to problems and, at the same time, encourage worker participation.



**Figure 15a. Form a small working group in which workers and supervisors can develop solutions to workplace problems.**



**Figure 15b. Organize regular on-site meetings in which workers are able to outline work-related problems and suggest possible solutions.**



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## Social support

Extensive social support is essential in preventing stress at work. The use of both formal and informal social support should be considered to reduce the effects of workplace stressors. Social support provided by managers, supervisors and co-workers helps workers cope with the pressures and stress at work. Social support also improves coping skills. There are various means of enhancing social support in the workplace. The following types of support, among others, seem particularly useful:

- close management–worker relations;
- mutual help among workers;
- the use of external sources of assistance;
- organization of social activities;
- provision of direct help when needed.

Such measures can provide practical and timely social support in the workplace.

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## CHECKPOINT 16

Establish close management–worker relations so that workers and managers can get support from each other.

### WHY

- Social support based on good management–worker relations contributes considerably to the reduction of stress at work. This is because close relations between workers and managers help reduce the adverse effects of stress.
- Support from managers based on good management–worker relations can increase workers' ability to cope with stress at work. Workers affected by work stress have to cope with it through various means, and this is often facilitated by the support given by their managers and co-workers.
- The supportive atmosphere created by the active participation of both managers and workers in solving workplace problems facilitates workplace action to reduce stress at work.

### HOW

1. Make it clear to all workers that management is committed to actively providing support to workers in improving workplace conditions and reducing stress at work.
2. Listen carefully to the opinions and complaints of workers about workplace problems and make the effort to take necessary measures to solve the problems.
3. Encourage workers to cooperate with managers in identifying and solving workplace problems. Workers often know the background and possible solutions to such problems and can help managers make necessary changes.
4. Openly discuss with workers how to solve important workplace problems and respond to workers' complaints about working conditions. Take active measures to follow up these problems and complaints.

5. Try to remove barriers in the workplace that hamper direct and indirect support being given by managers to workers and work teams. For example, openly announce that managers are willing to discuss any workplace problems with workers or to hold regular meetings with workers.
6. Record good examples of support given to workers by managers, or given to managers by workers. Publicize these good examples.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Encourage cooperation between managers and workers. This is facilitated by openly announcing a workplace policy encouraging measures for mutual support.
- Actively involve workers in important decision-making processes about workplace issues. Obtain the support of workers in solving workplace problems.
- Pay attention to different personalities and styles of working within teams. Remove obstacles which hamper good management–worker relations.
- Be aware that a laissez-faire attitude among managers and associated poor management of workplace issues greatly hamper mutual support between managers and workers.
- Provide training to managers and workers on mutual support and cooperation.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Good management–worker relations facilitate mutual support for solving workplace problems and reducing stress at work. Encourage a supportive atmosphere through both formal and informal means.



**Figure 16a. Make it clear to all workers that management is committed to actively providing support for workers in improving working conditions and reducing stress at work.**



**Figure 16b. Listen carefully to the opinions and complaints of individual workers about workplace problems and take immediate measures to solve the problems.**



## CHECKPOINT 17

Promote mutual help and sharing of knowledge and experience among workers.

### WHY

- Active collaboration among co-workers helps enhance companionship and increase the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress at work.
- Workers in a team have different backgrounds and personalities. Through helping each other and listening to colleagues, workers learn how to cooperate better and cope more effectively with work stress.
- Workers often feel isolated and at a loss in solving their personal problems. A supportive atmosphere helps such workers receive advice from colleagues and cope better with a seemingly difficult situation.
- Mutual care and sympathy nurtured among workers greatly assists with identifying reasons for workplace problems and finding effective means of reducing stress at work.

### HOW

1. Encourage mutual support among workers in identifying and solving workplace problems. This is best done by actively participating in joint decisions in a work team and organizing group discussions about solving common problems.
2. Discuss ways and means of providing mutual support within a work team, or between different teams, to solve problems at work.
3. Assign advisers or mentors for new workers and workers with problems. Exchange experiences in providing advice and mentoring.
4. Promote the formation of autonomous work teams and encourage supportive teamwork. Praise good teamwork performance.
5. Raise awareness of the advantages of promoting mutual support within work teams, or between different teams. Discuss these advantages in meetings and training sessions.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Collect good examples of mutual support among workers for solving workplace problems or assisting co-workers in difficult situations. Publicize these good examples through appropriate means such as newsletters.
- Exchange the positive experiences of advisers and mentors in providing support for their co-workers. Help them upgrade their skills and capacities in their advisory and mentoring work.
- In team meetings, discuss ways to enhance mutual support. Discuss concrete examples and effective support measures.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Support from colleagues through day-to-day collaboration and work team activities can develop a mutually supportive relationship conducive to stress prevention.



**Figure 17a. Encourage mutual support among workers in identifying and solving workplace problems. This is best done by joint decisions in a work team or group discussions about solutions.**



**Figure 17b. Make good use of advisers and mentors in providing support for their co-workers. Help them upgrade their skills in their advisory and mentoring work.**

## CHECKPOINT 18

Identify and utilize external sources for providing employee assistance.

### WHY

- In responding to and solving various problems faced by employees at work, it is useful to utilize external sources of assistance.
- Social workers, counselling services and employee assistance programmes (EAPs) can assist individual employees to examine and solve problems that would otherwise be difficult to cope with by themselves. They can assist, for example, in dealing with work issues, drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, and other social and family issues.
- Employees who need help can be assisted through an EAP established in the workplace with the support of external services. The use of such a programme is recommended to provide effective support for employees who face such difficult situations.

### HOW

1. Review the need for social services for workers who have difficulties in dealing with their personal problems. Attention is drawn to particularly difficult problems such as alcohol or drug abuse, social and family life issues, aged family members or persons with disabilities. Learn from examples of effective services provided by external social workers and other social service providers, and assess the merits of utilizing them.
2. Consult with external social workers and other social service providers, including EAP providers, on ways of assisting workers through using their services. Make sure there are adequate resources to secure the assistance of such services.
3. Designate people to be in charge of cooperating with external services which provide social support required by workers.

4. Ensure support from managers, supervisors and co-workers in planning and providing social support services for those workers in need of them.
5. Maintain confidentiality about the services provided to individual workers.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Where necessary, arrange for flexible work schedules and paid leave for workers dealing with personal problems.
- Assess the effectiveness of the social services provided by external agencies. As the needs of individuals differ, carefully examine personal needs and situations.
- Provide guidance and training to supervisors and workers in the use of external social services.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

External sources, including EAPs, are a valuable resource in helping workers in need of social assistance.



**Figure 18a. Provide the services of social workers and other employee assistance services to assist workers to deal with particularly difficult problems such as alcohol abuse or social and family life issues.**



**Figure 18b. Ensure support from qualified resource people to train workers to protect themselves and reduce stress at work.**

## CHECKPOINT 19

Organize social activities during or after work hours.

### WHY

- Social activities, including informal meetings and recreational activities, facilitate cooperation between managers and workers and among workers. Such activities, undertaken through the voluntary initiative of managers and workers, help improve the feeling of companionship.
- Social activities greatly enhance mutual understanding among people with different backgrounds and help maintain good human relations. Such activities are thus conducive to joint efforts to improve working conditions and reduce stress at work.
- Various social and recreational activities can be undertaken for workers. Suitable activities can be easily planned and implemented with the cooperation of local people.

### HOW

1. Find out, through workplace meetings and interviews, what types of social activities are favoured by managers and workers.
2. Form a small team comprising managers and workers to study their preferences for organizing social activities and appropriate timing.
3. Propose to managers and workers venue, content and timing of social activities, and gain their feedback to improve the plan. Where appropriate, organize activities during work hours so that many can attend.
4. Plan social activities with the cooperation of as many people as possible. Try to maintain an amicable atmosphere and the voluntary nature of activities. Parties, cultural events, sports events or informal meetings are commonly organized.
5. Evaluate any social activities undertaken and improve the venue, content and timing based on feedback from participants.

## SOME MORE HINTS

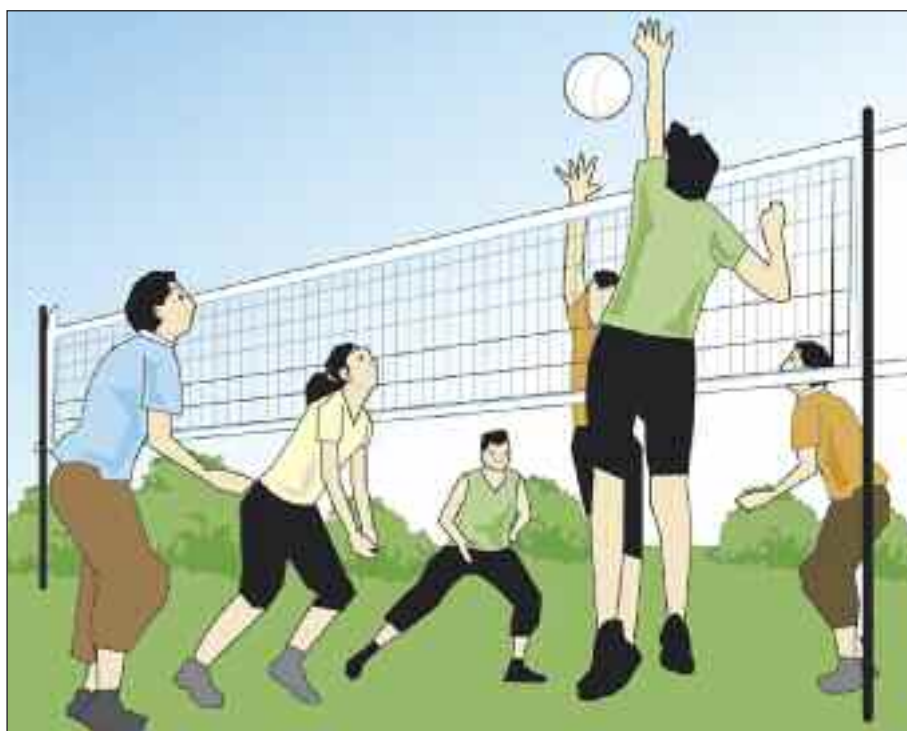
- Learn from similar events successfully organized by other local enterprises and groups. Examples are abundant in any locality.
- Include informal events attractive to participants such as prize-giving ceremonies, games, musical or cultural events, or competitions.
- Take into account the cultural differences of participants.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Social and recreational activities help enhance mutual understanding and maintain good human relations. They facilitate joint efforts to reduce stress at work.



**Figure 19a.** Find out, through workplace meetings and interviews, what types of social activities are favoured by managers and workers.



**Figure 19b.** Organize cultural events, sports events or informal meetings in an amicable atmosphere with the cooperation of as many people as possible.

## CHECKPOINT 20

Provide help and support to workers when needed.

### WHY

- Different workers need different levels and types of social support depending on their workplace conditions, personal circumstances and individual preferences. It is therefore necessary to provide individual workers or teams with locally focused help and support when they are needed.
- Help and support adapted to the needs of individual workers or teams can best be provided by managers and workers who maintain close relations with those in need of it. By encouraging targeted support, working conditions and personal circumstances can be improved.
- Timely support provided to workers having difficulty coping with existing situations can help them find suitable means of reducing stress at work.

### HOW

1. Make sure that managers, supervisors and workers understand the open-door policy of the workplace and talk to each other when they have problems.
2. Encourage workers, supervisors and managers to regularly ask each other how they are doing. Talk regularly, to try to understand the needs of individual workers for help and support.
3. Provide useful support to workers or teams when they face problems which are difficult to solve through their own individual efforts. There is a great variety of such problems, and therefore it is necessary to understand individual circumstances and cooperate in a suitable manner to solve them.
4. Provide support if possible and appropriate when a worker needs help. Evaluate the efficacy of the support and utilize external sources of support if necessary.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Keep close contact with all workers. For example, encourage managers and supervisors to talk to workers at their worksites.
- With key people participating in providing support to workers, discuss what types of support and timing will be effective.
- Keep individual issues private and confidential.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Timely help to workers in need facilitates their effectiveness in coping with pressures and stress.



**Figure 20a. Provide support to workers when they face problems they find difficult to solve through their own individual efforts.**



**Figure 20b. Be friendly when providing support tailored to the situation faced by a worker who needs help.**





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## Physical environment

The physical environment is a contributing factor to work stress. It is important to provide a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for workers. This can be achieved by assessing and controlling environmental risks with the active participation of workers. Practical measures can be taken based on site-specific assessment of environmental risks. The following are particularly important for preventing stress related to the physical environment:

- establish clear procedures for risk assessment and control;
- provide a comfortable working environment;
- eliminate or reduce hazards at their source;
- provide clean, refreshing rest facilities;
- establish emergency procedures and response plans.

It is essential to build a safe, healthy and comfortable working environment conducive to preventing stress among workers, in line with developments in occupational safety and health management systems.

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## CHECKPOINT 21

Establish clear procedures for risk assessment and control based on existing occupational safety and health management systems.

### WHY

- The employer has a duty to provide a safe and healthy working environment for the workers.
- Risk assessment and control involves the identification and assessment of hazards and risks in the workplace which might cause harm to workers' safety and health, and prioritization of measures to eliminate hazards and minimize risks.
- Methods of risk assessment and control consist of the following elements, normally performed in the following order:
  - identify and characterize hazards, and assess risks;
  - determine the risk (the potential that a hazard will lead to an undesirable outcome such as accident, injury or death);
  - identify ways to reduce those risks;
  - prioritize and implement risk reduction measures based on a strategy.
- Risk assessment and control in the workplace not only contributes to the continuous improvement of safety and health in the workplace, but also helps in gaining the confidence of the workers regarding the employer's concern for the working environment.

### HOW

1. Identify significant safety and health risks in the working environment by a joint walk-through of the workplace and group discussion involving supervisors and workers.
2. Identify who is at risk from the different kinds of risk factor.
3. Rate the risks with respect to existing control measures. This is done by following the risk rating procedures within existing occupational safety and health management systems.

4. Find out what additional control measures are necessary. According to the prioritization of these measures, implement effective risk control measures with the active participation of the supervisors and workers concerned.
5. Record the results of risk assessment and control. It is essential for management to review the record and discuss how continual improvement can be secured with the participation of workers.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Risk assessment and control must be evaluated regularly, in particular when there is change in the work process, use of hazardous chemicals or gases, or legislative requirements.
- Each workplace is different. Therefore, carrying out an assessment of risks at a particular workplace will help to produce tailor-made solutions to problems within that particular situation rather than to generalized risks.
- Workers with disabilities, pregnant women and nursing mothers might be at additional risk when working in certain environments. They may have special requirements which must be taken into account when assessing and addressing risks.
- Monitor and review the results of risk control measures. The results of monitoring and review should be communicated to all workers concerned.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Assess and control risks in the working environment. Secure the active participation of workers or their representatives in this process.



**Figure 21a. Identify and rate safety and health risks in the working environment by a joint walk-through and group discussion involving supervisors and workers.**



**Figure 21b. For effective risk control, determine what control measures are necessary through joint discussion with supervisors and workers.**

## CHECKPOINT 22

Provide a comfortable working environment that is conducive to physical and mental health.

### WHY

- A comfortable working environment and workplace contribute towards the health, safety and well-being of the workers, which in turn increases their productivity.
- Maintaining good physical and mental health among the workforce is important to industry productivity and profitability. This should be reinforced by continual improvement of the working environment.
- The sustainable improvement of occupational safety and health can be achieved by providing a safe, healthy and comfortable working environment.

### HOW

1. Recognize and accept the employer's responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace and work environment for his or her employees.
2. Communicate to all workers the occupational safety and health policy, and implement action programmes based on this policy.
3. Undertake risk assessment and control as appropriate to identify and mitigate workplace hazards.
4. Implement all statutory safety and health requirements.
5. Ensure workers receive sufficient information, instruction and training regarding the risks associated with work activities and how to take protective measures against them.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Try to improve the working environment and make the workplace comfortable for workers. Use indicators, for example, with respect to illumination, noise, and airborne concentrations of dust and hazardous chemicals.

- Fix a target for reducing work-related accidents and illnesses. Discuss with managers, supervisors and the workers concerned how to achieve the target.
- Make sure the views of workers are reflected in decision-making concerning improvement of the working environment.
- Use appropriate information materials and posters to inform workers about workplace risks, proper preventive measures and progress being made in controlling them.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

A good working environment is a motivating factor for workers. It is essential to create a comfortable working environment conducive to the physical and mental health of all workers.



**Figure 22a. Recognize the employer's responsibility to provide a safe and comfortable workplace and work environment for each worker.**



**Figure 22b. Provide a comfortable working environment for workers. Implement workplace improvements and make sure that the views of workers are reflected in decision-making.**

## CHECKPOINT 23

Eliminate or reduce safety and health hazards at their source.

### WHY

- Control of hazards at source is the first approach to reducing the hazards associated with work activities and processes in order to protect the workers, the public and the environment.
- Control of hazards at source is an effective practical approach – and the preferred strategy for safety and health at work – as it is often cost-effective. It offers enterprises substantial savings in reducing the waste of raw materials, as well as in costs for pollution control, workers' injury and ill health, and liability.
- Workers are protected against hazards when control of hazards takes place at source.

### HOW

1. Confirm whether any identified workplace hazards can be eliminated by modifying the work process or replacing hazardous materials with non-hazardous ones.
2. Apply engineering controls to enclose or cover hazardous materials and work processes so that workers are not exposed to associated risks.
3. When the sources of workplace hazards cannot be eliminated or enclosed, apply additional engineering control measures to reduce exposure levels. For example, effective local exhaust equipment should be installed to reduce airborne concentrations of dust or hazardous chemicals that leak into the air in the workplace.
4. Discuss with supervisors and workers whether additional engineering control measures or the use of personal protective equipment are needed.
5. Where engineering controls are not effective or adequate to reduce exposure to a safe level, personal protective equipment must be used.

6. Check that appropriate types of personal protective equipment are chosen and adequately used.

### SOME MORE HINTS

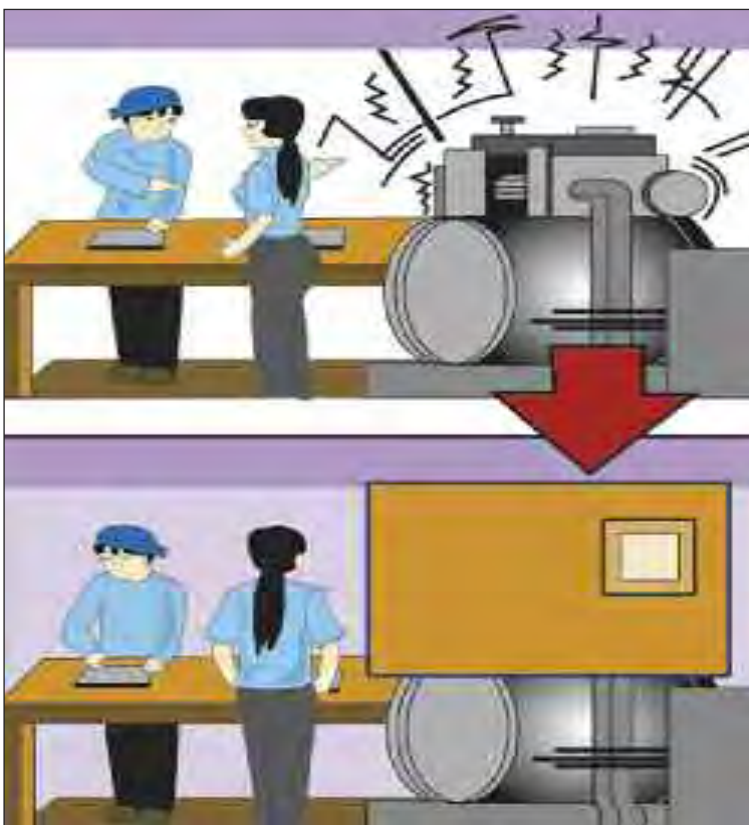
- Ensure that waste disposal procedures are appropriate.
- When new work processes are introduced or a major change occurs in work processes, assess the risk of exposure to hazards.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

To protect workers, apply engineering control of hazards at source. Resort to personal protective equipment only if engineering controls and other protective measures are not adequate and cannot reduce the exposure of workers to a safe level.



**Figure 23a. Apply engineering controls, such as two-button control for a dangerous press machine, so that workers are not exposed to associated risks.**



**Figure 23b. Enclose the hazard source, such as a noisy machine, to reduce the safety and health risk and increase productivity.**



## CHECKPOINT 24

Provide clean rest facilities.

### WHY

- Clean and well-maintained rest facilities for employees ensure good hygiene and tidiness in the enterprise.
- Workers who do arduous and hazardous work or work in polluted areas need clean rest areas. These areas must be free from the risks of inhalation of polluted air, absorption of pollutants through the skin and ingestion through food.
- A good, clean, homey rest area with all amenities helps maintain good working conditions and workers' health.
- Clean rest facilities are a mark of a good, employee-friendly workplace.

### HOW

1. Provide a sufficient number of conveniently located rest rooms away from the workstation and maintain the hygiene of these rooms. Regularly check the cleanliness and maintenance of these facilities.
2. Along with the rest areas, provide the following well-maintained facilities with due consideration for pregnant women and nursing mothers:
  - access to clean and pure drinking water;
  - eating areas free from dust and industrial pollutants;
  - good changing, washing and sanitary areas.
3. Rest areas must have adequate seating arrangements such as chairs (with back- and arm-rests), sofas and tables. Rest areas must be free from noise, dust, and chemicals and other industrial pollutants. Maintain a comfortable temperature in the

rooms (provide a heater in cold countries and air conditioner in tropical countries), with adequate ventilation.

4. Improve the design of and introduce additional facilities to rest areas, if needed, in consultation with the employees.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Rest facilities must not be used for changing personal protective clothing that has been contaminated during work operations. There must be separate rooms for changing work clothing and outdoor clothing.
- Pregnant women and nursing mothers should be provided with additional facilities where they can lie down and rest or feed their babies, if necessary.
- Smoking should be prohibited in rest areas for all workers. Separate rooms or areas for smokers, if provided, should have signs warning that smoking is bad for one's health.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Clean and well-maintained rest facilities and other amenities are always appreciated by workers and provide a homey atmosphere.



**Figure 24a. Provide a sufficient number of conveniently located rest rooms for workers and periodically check the hygiene of these rooms.**



**Figure 24b. Provide comfortable and hygienic eating areas free from noise, dust and pollutants.**

## CHECKPOINT 25

Establish emergency plans to facilitate emergency operations and rapid evacuation.

### WHY

- A fire, natural disaster or major accident can happen at any time and everyone in the workplace needs to know how to react and what to do.
- Fear of an emergency such as a fire, flood or explosion, coupled with lack of knowledge of what to do, can create panic reactions, discomfort, stress and, ultimately, a negative impact on productivity.
- A well-written, communicated and drilled emergency plan can reduce the serious consequences of a major emergency and prevent a minor emergency from becoming a major catastrophic event.
- As it may be difficult to remember everything that needs to be done in an emergency, an easy-to-read, well-organized set of instructions must be prepared in advance. Everyone must be trained in carrying out emergency procedures, including evacuation.

### HOW

1. With the assistance of municipal officials, determine the nature of potential emergencies that may affect the workplace as well as the surrounding community.
2. Include the employer, workers, safety and health personnel, and municipal emergency services in discussions to determine what kinds of action need to be taken in each type of emergency. Take into account the likelihood of fire, explosion and the release of hazardous substances, and potential injuries.
3. Through group discussion, establish priority actions which need to be taken for each type of emergency. These may include shut-down procedures, calling in outside help, first-aid procedures and emergency evacuation. Workers, supervisors, and safety and health personnel must participate in these

discussions. Take into account workers with special needs such as those with disabilities and pregnant women.

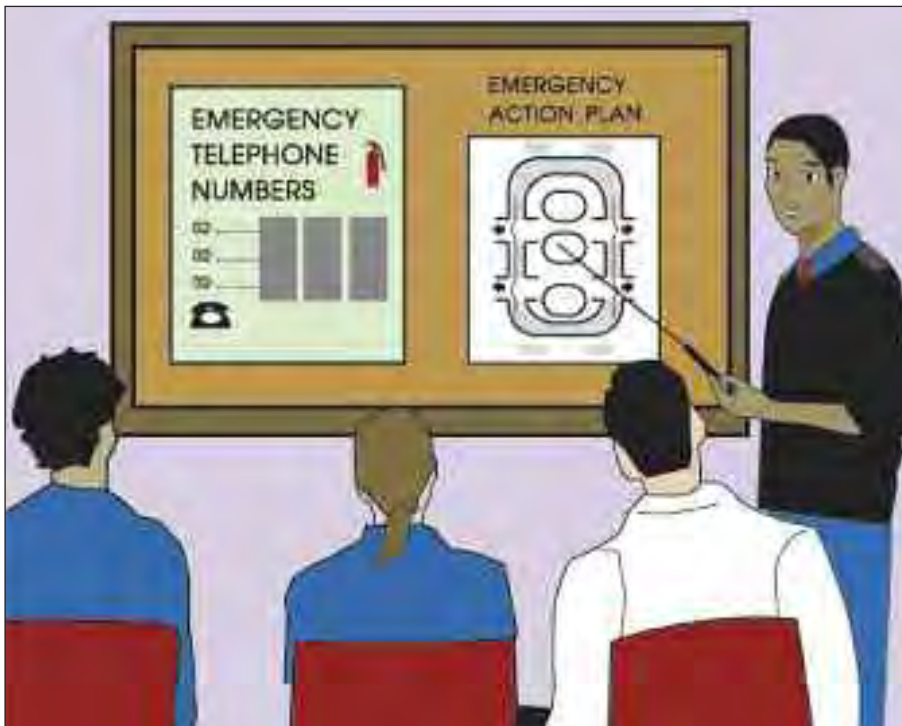
4. Once the procedures are established, make emergency actions known to all concerned. For those who must take specific action in an emergency, frequent and repeated training is essential. Conduct evacuation drills.
5. Clearly post and continually update a list of emergency telephone numbers, emergency procedures and evacuation routes. Confirm that all workers know where the list is located. Make sure that all on-site emergency equipment (first-aid boxes, emergency medical equipment, protective equipment, means of transport such as emergency stretchers, and fire-fighting equipment) are clearly marked and readily accessible.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- When planning for evacuation, ensure that each workstation has two unobstructed, clearly lighted means of exit all the way out of the workplace, and that there is an external meeting-place where workers can be accounted for.
- Make it clearly known who will be in charge during emergencies.
- When changes occur in the workplace which impact on emergency procedures (e.g., changes in production or remodelling), make sure the changes are reflected in emergency plans and procedures.
- In developing emergency plans, include an assessment of risks in the vicinity of the workplace.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Everyone in the workplace should know exactly what to do in an emergency. Good emergency planning can prevent serious accidents.



**Figure 25a. Prepare emergency action plans with the participation of workers. Secure evacuation routes and first-aid measures for all workers, including those with special needs.**



**Figure 25b. Make sure that workers know how to use on-site emergency equipment such as fire-fighting equipment.**



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## Work–life balance and working time

Work–life balance and working-time arrangements are important factors impacting on stress at work. Improvements to working-time arrangements and other measures may be necessary to better support work–life balance. Stress at work is particularly related to long working hours, irregular shift systems, and whether adequate holidays, paid leave and breaks are provided. Multifaceted support measures are needed to reduce fatigue, enhance safety and health, and support the maintenance of family responsibilities. Practical measures to improve working-time arrangements and work–life balance include:

- involving workers in the design of working hours;
- accommodating the needs of both the work and the workers;
- avoiding excessively long working hours;
- facilitating the maintenance of family responsibilities;
- adjusting breaks and rest time.

Taking multifaceted measures which reflect the needs and preferences of both the enterprise and workers is particularly important in maintaining work–life balance.

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## CHECKPOINT 26

Involve workers in the design of working hours.

### WHY

- A range of working-time arrangements is possible, with differing starting and finishing times, rest periods, breaks, shift lengths and regularity, distribution of days off, and so on. Variety is the key to developing options which balance the needs of both the work and the workers.
- Different workers have different needs. It is essential to involve everyone concerned from the planning stage.
- Workers will be more mentally and physically fit for work – and more productive – when work and family life are in balance.
- When workers are able to reconcile work and private life it is beneficial for both the enterprise and the family.

### HOW

1. Identify possible options for working-time arrangements through group discussion involving the workers concerned or their representatives.
2. In doing so, consider that there are various ways of changing working-time arrangements. Common examples include:
  - changing starting/finishing times;
  - inserting breaks;
  - distributing working hours evenly over time;
  - allocating holidays;
  - arranging for flexitime;
  - optimizing shift schedules and length;
  - providing part-time work;
  - arranging job sharing.

3. Accommodate workers' preferences, safety and health requirements, and business requirements, and agree on concrete plans.
4. Check again with the workers whether the established plan is appropriate and test the new arrangements.
5. Organize training workshops for managers and workers about the health effects of different work schedules and to design better working-time arrangements.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Both work requirements and workers' preferences, along with safety and health requirements, should be taken into account.
- Workers' participation in arranging their working-time schedules helps them fulfil family responsibilities.
- Good examples of working-time arrangements in similar establishments can serve as workable models.
- Establish a planning team that includes workers' representatives and supervisors to identify practical options. The plan presented by the team can be used as a basis for further workplace consultations.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Working-time arrangements affect everyday life. Involving workers in the design of work schedules produces better results and higher job satisfaction.



**Figure 26a. In designing working-time arrangements, accommodate both workers' preferences and work requirements.**



**Figure 26b. Secure sufficient time for rest periods and free-time activities. Commuting, social life, leisure activities and relaxation are factors affecting our ability to cope with stress.**



## CHECKPOINT 27

Plan work schedules to accommodate the needs of the enterprise and the special needs of workers.

### WHY

- Flexible work schedules are increasingly applied to meet the needs of the enterprise and the personal preferences of workers. Since the advantages and disadvantages of particular work schedules differ for the enterprise and workers, coordinated efforts are needed to accommodate such differences.
- Flexible work schedules, often combined with irregular shifts such as weekend shifts and night shifts, are favoured by those enterprises trying to meet market needs, production targets or deadlines. Work schedules planned in response to these needs may be different from those preferred by workers for meeting their personal, social and family needs.
- Flexible or irregular work schedules often give rise to difficulties in supervision and work organization, and can cause fluctuations in work outputs and quality. Career development and skills training are also relevant. As these drawbacks have different impacts on the enterprise and on workers, they should be examined carefully.
- Flexible work schedules often lead to long shift hours, frequent night or evening shifts, work during weekends and holidays, and effects on safety and workers' health and well-being. The pros and cons of traditional and flexible work schedules should be discussed with the active participation of both managers and workers.

### HOW

1. Examine different options for work schedules preferred by the enterprise and by workers. The merits and disadvantages of changing work schedules should be discussed through joint examination of these options.
2. Complex factors relating to flexible or irregular work schedules should be taken into account in designing work schedules. The different needs and

preferences of the enterprise and workers should be discussed openly and based on available data.

3. Compare the merits and drawbacks for the enterprise and for workers, and jointly examine the options agreeable to both.
4. Learn from good examples of similar work schedules in other workplaces or other industries.
5. If necessary, undertake trial periods to determine the impacts on the business and working life. Discuss workable options by getting feedback from both managers and workers.
6. Check support measures available for the enterprise and for the workers concerned. Some of the drawbacks may be overcome through support measures.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Take into account seasonal fluctuations in the needs and preferences of both the enterprise and the workers.
- The link with local communities and their services should also be taken into account. The effects of local culture or the workers' different cultures need to be considered.
- Mutual understanding and a flexible process of consultation between the enterprise and worker representatives are important.
- Impacts on the safety and health of workers must be one of the major concerns in exploring agreeable options.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Needs and preferences regarding work schedules often differ between the enterprise and workers. Jointly examine workable options which can accommodate the needs of all.



**Figure 27a.** Apply flexible work schedules to meet the needs of the enterprise and customers as well as the personal preferences of workers.



**Figure 27b.** Take into account the impact of working hours on the safety and health of workers when agreeing on work schedules.

## CHECKPOINT 28

Establish measures and limits to avoid excessively long working hours.

### WHY

- During a prolonged period of work longer than a normal shift, fatigue tends to accumulate and recovery is much delayed. Overly long working hours can lead to stress-induced illness.
- A much longer than normal shift reduces the length of free time available for sleep and rest periods that are essential for recovery from fatigue. Therefore, those who work excessively long shifts have to start the next shift without sufficient recovery from fatigue, due to shorter sleep and rest hours.
- Long overtime hours are common in heavy workload situations. Long overtime hours plus high workload produces a double burden on workers' health. Make every effort to avoid excessively long overtime hours in all types of work.
- Excessively long working hours often result from working combined shifts, such as night duties after a day shift, or daytime duties subsequent to a night shift. Double shifts or excessively prolonged shifts must be avoided.

### HOW

1. Check the length of different shifts and examine whether prolonged shift hours lead to excessive fatigue or hamper recovery from fatigue. Also check overtime hours to determine whether accumulated overtime hours per week or per month are excessive and result in excessive or chronic fatigue for the workers concerned.
2. Rearrange work schedules to avoid excessively long shifts. This should be combined with setting a limit to overtime hours that might otherwise lead to excessive fatigue and hamper recovery during the intervals between shifts.
3. Discuss jointly with managers and worker representatives effective measures to avoid excessively long working hours. Jointly examine

whether a limit on overtime hours can be set and observed. Also discuss whether the hours between shifts are sufficient to ensure recovery from fatigue.

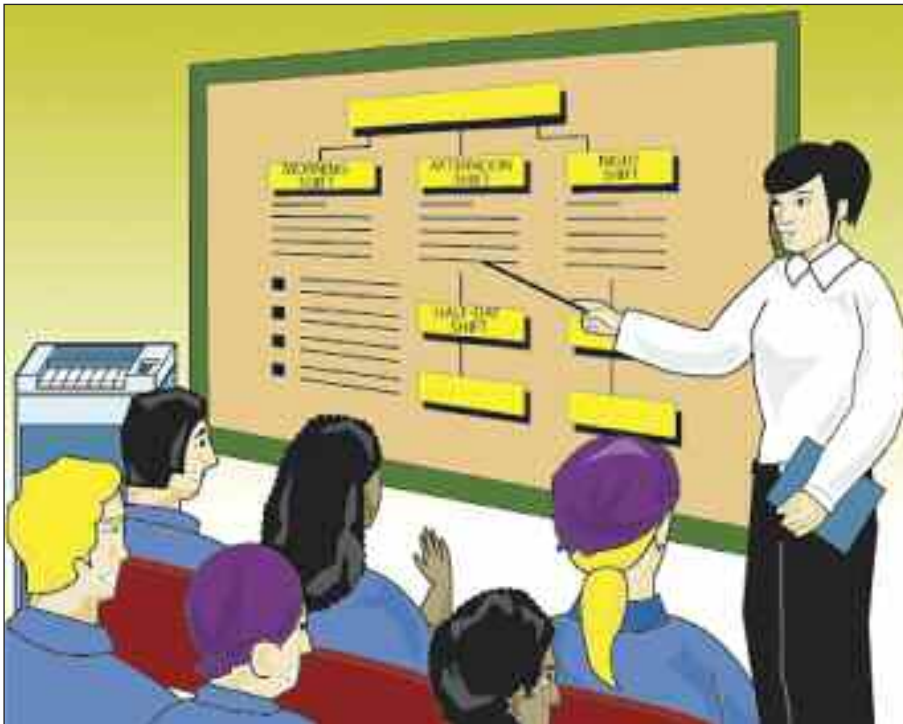
4. Introduce a special campaign to eliminate excessively long shifts by limiting and reducing overtime hours. This could include collaborative effort to reduce overtime hours, setting "non-overtime days", and cooperation between management and workers to limit overtime hours.
5. As well as checking the length of shifts and overtime hours, examine rest periods and rest facilities. Discuss measures to secure sufficient rest periods in relation to prolonged shift hours and night shifts.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Check whether holidays, including days off between shifts, are sufficient and conducive to recovery from fatigue due to long or irregular shifts.
- Make sure that the periods between shifts are long enough and do not result in accumulated or chronic fatigue. Attention should be drawn to two or more consecutive shifts of excessive length. It is necessary to rearrange work schedules to avoid such a situation.
- As excessively long working hours occur as a result of complex factors such as heavy workload, strict deadlines, shortage of skilled workers and market situations, make coordinated efforts to avoid overly long hours of work.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Excessively long working hours lead to excessive fatigue and increased risk of occupational injury and stress-induced illness. Make coordinated efforts to avoid long working hours.



**Figure 28a.** Rearrange work schedules to avoid excessively long shifts and too little time for rest. Set a limit to overtime hours, to minimize the impacts of overtime on the well-being of workers.



**Figure 28b.** Introduce a special campaign to limit and reduce excessively long overtime hours, for example, by designating “non-overtime days” (i.e., not permitting work “after-five”) and supporting management and workers’ cooperation in limiting overtime hours.

## CHECKPOINT 29

Optimize working-time arrangements to allow workers to fulfil their family responsibilities.

### WHY

- Working-time arrangements have significant impacts on the execution of family responsibilities. Family well-being is significantly influenced by long hours of work, irregular shifts, frequency and distribution of evening and night shifts, holidays, commuting time and paid leave. Integrated measures are necessary to support workers engaged in different working-time arrangements to fulfil their family responsibilities.
- Disruption to social and family life, and associated stress, need to be taken into account in designing shift systems and other irregular and flexible working-time arrangements. It is necessary to minimize such disruptions by adopting appropriate work schedules which include, for example, free time, rest periods, support for maternity and child care, flexible working-time systems, secured weekends and holidays, and improved entitlement for paid leave.
- It is important to provide various support measures to enable workers to fulfil their family responsibilities. As these responsibilities differ depending on personal circumstances, multifaceted measures are usually required.
- In view of the close link between work schedules and the ability to fulfil family responsibilities, the active participation of workers is essential in designing work schedules.

### HOW

1. Examine workers' preferences regarding working-time arrangements and their relation to the execution of family responsibilities. Discuss which aspects of working-time arrangements are most important.
2. Increase flexibility in working-time arrangements so that working hours and leave can be arranged according to the personal needs of workers.

3. Promote multi-skilling of workers so that replacements can easily be found for those who take time off to fulfil their family responsibilities.
4. Establish policies to accommodate the needs of workers in taking annual, childcare and educational leave.
5. Provide multifaceted support measures to assist workers in meeting their family responsibilities.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Provide support for workers who need to use childcare and eldercare services.
- Encourage co-worker support with regard to meeting family responsibilities.
- Provide support for workers to use commuting services.
- Encourage workers' volunteer activities in their communities.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Increase flexibility in working-time arrangements to assist workers to fulfil their family responsibilities.



**Figure 29a.** Increase flexibility in working-time arrangements so that working hours, days off and leave can be arranged according to the social and family needs of workers.



**Figure 29b.** Provide support for workers needing childcare and other social services.

## CHECKPOINT 30

Adjust the length and frequency of breaks and rest time according to workload.

### WHY

- Working continuously without breaks is often very strenuous and increases fatigue. It is necessary to insert breaks before fatigue becomes excessive.
- Long periods of continuous work increase the risk of accident. The accuracy of work decreases and the possibility of human error increases with the accumulation of fatigue. The quality of work also decreases when work periods are too long.
- It is better to insert frequent short breaks for preventing fatigue than to take a long break after a much longer period of work. It is therefore useful to plan short breaks before excessive fatigue sets in and recovery requires much more time. This is also beneficial for preventing musculoskeletal disorders and reducing stress related to strenuous types of work.
- Securing a comfortable, refreshing environment in which to take short breaks is equally important.

### HOW

1. Insert short breaks of 10–15 minutes at least once in the morning work period and once in the afternoon work period during a day shift. Similar short breaks are also advisable for other shifts of several hours, such as an evening or night shift.
2. If the work is strenuous or requires continued attentiveness – such as continuous computer operations, fast and repetitive work or intensive inspection tasks – allow for short breaks after every hour of work.
3. Combine strenuous work with other activities, so that work involving constrained posture, muscular load, eye strain or mental concentration can be alternated with other types of work.
4. Encourage people to do relaxation exercises, stretching or recreational activities during breaks.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- For strenuous types of work, or work in an unpleasant environment such as pronounced heat or cold, frequent breaks are essential.
- Taking a break prior to the onset of fatigue is much more effective than taking a longer break once fatigue has set in. For example, when working with visual display units, plan your breaks at regular intervals, say, every hour.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Frequent short breaks facilitate recovery from fatigue and lead to safer and more efficient work processes.



**Figure 30a. Insert short breaks during a work shift and encourage people to do relaxing exercises, stretching or recreational activities during their breaks.**



**Figure 30b. Provide refreshing and relaxing facilities for frequent short breaks as they are essential for recovery from fatigue and stress reduction.**





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## Recognition at work

Recognition at work is an important aspect of stress prevention at work. By properly recognizing good work performance and the positive contribution of workers, the enterprise can show its appreciation of good work which is also good for the enterprise. Such positive feedback fosters mutual respect and partnership within the enterprise. Practical measures which can be taken in this context include:

- praising good work by the workers;
- systematically informing workers of the consequences of their work;
- implementing a system for workers to express their opinions;
- treating women and men equally;
- providing good career prospects.

Acknowledging and respecting workers' efforts thus contributes to stress prevention in the workplace.

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## CHECKPOINT 31

Openly praise good work by workers and teams.

### WHY

- Good work accomplished by workers or work teams exemplifies good performance. It usually results from cooperation in the workplace. It is useful to record specific examples of good work and openly praise those responsible.
- Improvement of working conditions will be more effective when workers are involved in planning and implementation of the improvement process. Candid praise of good performance encourages both managers and workers to achieve good practice and make improvements.
- It is important to show the commitment of the enterprise to constant improvement. This commitment should be confirmed by properly recognizing and rewarding workers when they succeed in making improvements and achieving exemplary practices.

### HOW

1. Establish a clear policy to openly reward exemplary work. Publicize exemplary work in meetings or newsletters. Make it known to all workers that the enterprise is committed to promoting good practice through the joint efforts of managers and workers.
2. Encourage planning and implementation of improvements to work organization and productivity. Establish simple procedures to report improvements accomplished and resulting good practices.
3. Reward those who demonstrate exemplary practice, by means appropriate to the enterprise's overall policy. Forms of reward can include announcing the best workers or groups, rewarding them with some form of remuneration, inviting them to special events or organizing ceremonial occasions.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Establish a reward system and make it known to all through meetings, notices or newsletters. Obtain feedback about the system and good practices that have been rewarded.
- Communicate to all that the enterprise is committed to encouraging good practice in improving working conditions and work organization.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Reward workers or work teams for their good work. This assists in creating a healthy enterprise culture, increasing productivity and profitability, and preventing workplace stress.



Figure 31a. Establish a system to reward improvements that have been accomplished and resulting good practices.



Figure 31b. Organize ceremonial occasions to reward workers for their exemplary work or other means appropriate to the enterprise's overall policy.

## CHECKPOINT 32

Implement a system by which workers know the consequences of their work.

### WHY

- Informing workers frequently about the results of their work contributes greatly to creating a workplace climate of mutual cooperation. By knowing exactly what managers think about their work performance and results, workers become ready to learn and change.
- It is useful to tell people when they are doing well. It is also useful to tell them if their work needs improvement so that they know what is expected of them. In this way, management and workers can better communicate with each other and improve overall performance.
- Workers are often isolated from each other and do not have the opportunity to learn what happens after their part of the work has been done. Special care is needed to inform them about the results of their work.

### HOW

1. Let workers know that their work is appreciated when they do their jobs well. Be specific in telling them exactly what and where they did well.
2. When workers are not doing their jobs well, tell them what is unsatisfactory. Focus on how to correct this, while also acknowledging their strengths.
3. Provide opportunities to show workers how specific jobs could be done better. Give examples and demonstrations from experienced workers.
4. Make sure that workers are informed regularly about the results of their work. This should be done in such a way as to avoid giving the impression that the work is simply being supervised for disciplinary purposes. Let workers know how important their work results are to their co-workers, customers and the enterprise.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Providing workers with feedback on their good work helps them develop a sense of pride and self-esteem. This encourages them to work better in the future.
- When informing workers regularly about their work results, convey a sense of collegiality and teamwork.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Informing workers about the results of their work helps motivate them to do a better job. Encourage a sense of teamwork and workplace collegiality by telling workers how they are doing, and the impact of their work on others and the enterprise as a whole.



**Figure 32a.** Let workers know if they do their jobs well. Be specific in telling them exactly what and where they did well.



**Figure 32b.** When informing workers about their work results, tell them how their good work benefits others and the enterprise as a whole.

## CHECKPOINT 33

Implement a system in which workers are able to express their feelings and opinions.

### WHY

- Jobs are carried out far more effectively when people know what others are doing and thinking, and how they can cooperate with each other.
- When busy completing their daily tasks, both managers and workers tend not to give sufficient time to communicate with each other about their feelings and opinions. It is necessary to create adequate, concrete opportunities for communication.
- Problems relating to poor communication are multifaceted, often difficult to predict and may increase stress at work. They include work under pressure due to delays, low quality of work, mistakes, accidents and poor human relations. Most of these problems may increase stress at work. Therefore, multiple channels for facilitating communication should be explored.

### HOW

1. Arrange work team procedures so that workers can communicate with other team members from time to time. Create opportunities for casual talk.
2. Organize brief meetings, at the beginning of work or shift if appropriate, to give instructions, explain the day's work plans and have a question-and-answer session. In some industries, this is called a "tool-box meeting".
3. Encourage group planning and implementation of tasks, in particular by assigning work to the group instead of individuals. This facilitates communication and close cooperation.
4. Provide adequate opportunities for training and retraining workers in communication skills. This helps improve communication and mutual support.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Avoid totally isolated work as much as possible.
- Use newsletters, leaflets, updated instructions, posters and verbal presentations to increase communication.
- Provide changing rooms, rest areas, drinking facilities and eating areas for common use so that workers frequently have the chance to talk to each other and their managers.
- Encourage appropriate job rotation. This helps workers acquire multiple skills and increases communication and mutual support.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Create more chances for workers to express their feelings and opinions with each other and talk to managers. This increases companionship and leads to mutual support and better work results.



**Figure 33a. Organize brief meetings, at the beginning of work or shift if appropriate, to explain the day's work plans and discuss teamwork arrangements.**



**Figure 33b. Provide opportunities to talk about working conditions and communicate feelings and opinions with each other.**



## CHECKPOINT 34

Treat women and men equally.

### WHY

- Establishing a clear policy of treating women and men equally is essential for a healthy enterprise culture. Such a policy should include equal treatment in employment conditions, career development, work design and participation in workplace activities.
- Stereotypes and customary prejudice are judgemental and can lead to discrimination on the basis of sex. They must be replaced by equal treatment based on objective assessment of each worker's own skills, performance and capabilities, not on assumptions related to their sex or other personal characteristics which are irrelevant to work. Special care should be taken to avoid discrimination based on sex or gender.
- In some cultures, women are sometimes more reserved about voicing their opinions about their work, for instance regarding changes that they consider necessary. Particular attention should be paid to the effective participation of women.
- Women often have more difficulties in terms of work–life balance than men, depending on social circumstances. They may bear a double burden in caring for the home and family before and after work. This may hamper their full participation in accessing fair job opportunities or developing work skills. The active participation of women greatly helps implement adequate workplace improvements.

### HOW

1. Establish and implement a clear policy of treating women and men equally. The policy should apply to all aspects of work, including recruitment, work assignment, workplace design, wages and benefits, career development, training, and participation in meetings and work improvement processes.

2. In work assignment and career development, special care should be taken to treat women and men equally based on objective assessment of their skills, performance, capabilities and characteristics. Listen carefully to the suggestions of women workers in this regard, and address shortcomings in a coherent manner.
3. Provide adequate support for women and men to execute their assigned work. Support is often necessary for maintaining work–life balance. Work schedules, commuting and family responsibilities may differ between female and male workers.
4. Secure training opportunities for managers and workers on the importance of providing equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace.
5. Provide formal and informal opportunities to equitably reflect on the views of both women and men regarding work improvements.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Actively involve female and male workers in planning work and improving workplace conditions and work organization.
- Take into account the family responsibilities of individual workers when organizing meetings and other events.
- Discuss with workers necessary measures and modifications in order that women and men be treated equally in the workplace.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Actively involve women and men in planning and organizing work, and make sure that women and men are equally treated in all aspects of work.



**Figure 34. Listen carefully to workers' suggestions regarding the equal treatment of women and men with respect to work assignment and career development. Take special care to address shortcomings in a coherent manner.**

## CHECKPOINT 35

Provide good career prospects.

### WHY

- Measures to promote workers' well-being in working life are often strongly associated with career development and organizational commitment to supporting adequate career paths. Poor career prospects are often given as a reason for leaving a job. Fair career prospects are an important factor in reducing stress at work and maintaining workforce stability.
- Support for career development is essential to maintaining and increasing workers' morale and commitment to work. Ensure that workers are treated fairly when work is assigned and encouraged to progress in their career. Shortcomings in this regard are not often readily apparent. Particular attention needs to be given to the career prospects of different groups of workers.
- The commitment of management and workers to career development affects the development of workers' abilities and roles. It is necessary to show this commitment by actively implementing concrete measures, such as reviewing career mobility and roles, mentoring and training.

### HOW

1. Demonstrate management's commitment to supporting career development on the basis of fairness and equal opportunities for all.
2. Regularly review measures to support career development. Discuss and review results with workers and their representatives to determine what improvements are needed. Also examine whether adequate upward mobility is provided.
3. Examine on-the-job training for workers and make adjustments if necessary to improve its effectiveness.
4. Provide support for workers in new positions to develop their communication and supervisory capabilities and help them adjust to their new roles.

5. Encourage workers to attend training courses to upgrade work and management skills and capabilities.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Encourage workers to exchange positive experiences in skills training and career development.
- Provide adequate mentoring and coaching to assist workers in developing their careers.
- Organize regular team meetings in which career prospects and support for career development are discussed.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Ensure that equitable support for career development is provided and that it is adequately utilized by workers.



**Figure 35. Regularly discuss measures to support skills training and career development with workers and their representatives to determine what improvements are needed.**



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## **Protection from offensive behaviour**

Offensive behaviour in the workplace, such as bullying, mobbing, sexual harassment, threats and violence, is very common. It has serious consequences for both victims and the climate of the workplace. It is important to establish firm policies and adequately deal with such behaviour. Comprehensive preventive and mitigating measures are necessary which involve the active cooperation of all people in the workplace. Effective measures against offensive behaviour at work include:

- establishing an organizational framework concerning offensive behaviour;
- organizing training and raising awareness;
- establishing procedures and action models;
- providing rapid intervention to help those involved;
- organizing working areas so as to protect workers from offensive behaviour.

By establishing a good organizational framework for dealing with offensive behaviour, workers' commitment and mutual trust will be increased.

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## CHECKPOINT 36

Establish and implement an organizational framework and strategies in which offensive behaviour is prevented or dealt with promptly and adequately.

### WHY

- Offensive behaviour (bullying, mobbing, sexual harassment, threats, violence, etc.) is very common at some workplaces.
- Offensive behaviour may have very serious short- and long-term consequences for the victims.
- Offensive behaviour is often targeted at the weaker party in a relationship (e.g., at women by men, at workers by supervisors, at young people by older people, at workers by customers). This means that outside assistance will often be necessary to stop the offensive behaviour.
- Many companies do not have firm policies on offensive behaviour and management is often uncertain about how to deal with the issue.

### HOW

1. The following behaviours in the workplace should be clearly recognized as offensive:
  - bullying and mobbing;
  - sexual harassment;
  - violence;
  - threats of violence;
  - other forms of behaviour such as nasty teasing, slander, insult and gossip.
2. It should be made clear that such forms of behaviour are unacceptable in any form in the workplace.
3. It should be acknowledged that offensive behaviour can come from colleagues, supervisors, clients, customers or outside persons.

4. It should also be acknowledged that bullying and mobbing often come from colleagues or supervisors (insiders) while violence or threats of violence often come from customers, clients, or citizens in general (outsiders).
5. Workplace policy should deal with both primary prevention (i.e., how to prevent offensive behaviour) and secondary prevention (i.e., how to help workers who have been offended and deal with the offender or offenders).
6. Workplace policy should also include a procedure for ensuring that an offended worker can return to work after a period of psychological or physical illness. This includes ensuring that the offensive behaviour will not continue.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- In case of violence or threat of violence it will often be appropriate to turn the offender in to the police, since violence is against the law in all countries. This also applies to serious cases of sexual harassment.
- In most cases it will be necessary to dismiss or relocate the offender, depending on the circumstances surrounding and the nature of the offence. It is particularly important that the offended person not be forced to continue working close to the offender.
- It is extremely important that workers are aware that the workplace has a firm policy on offensive behaviour and that the policy is implemented in every case, including when the offender is a supervisor or higher ranking person.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

It is important to have a clear policy on offensive behaviour, and it is even more important that the policy be implemented to prevent offensive behaviour from occurring in the workplace. Prevention of offensive behaviour increases workers' feeling of security and trust in the workplace.

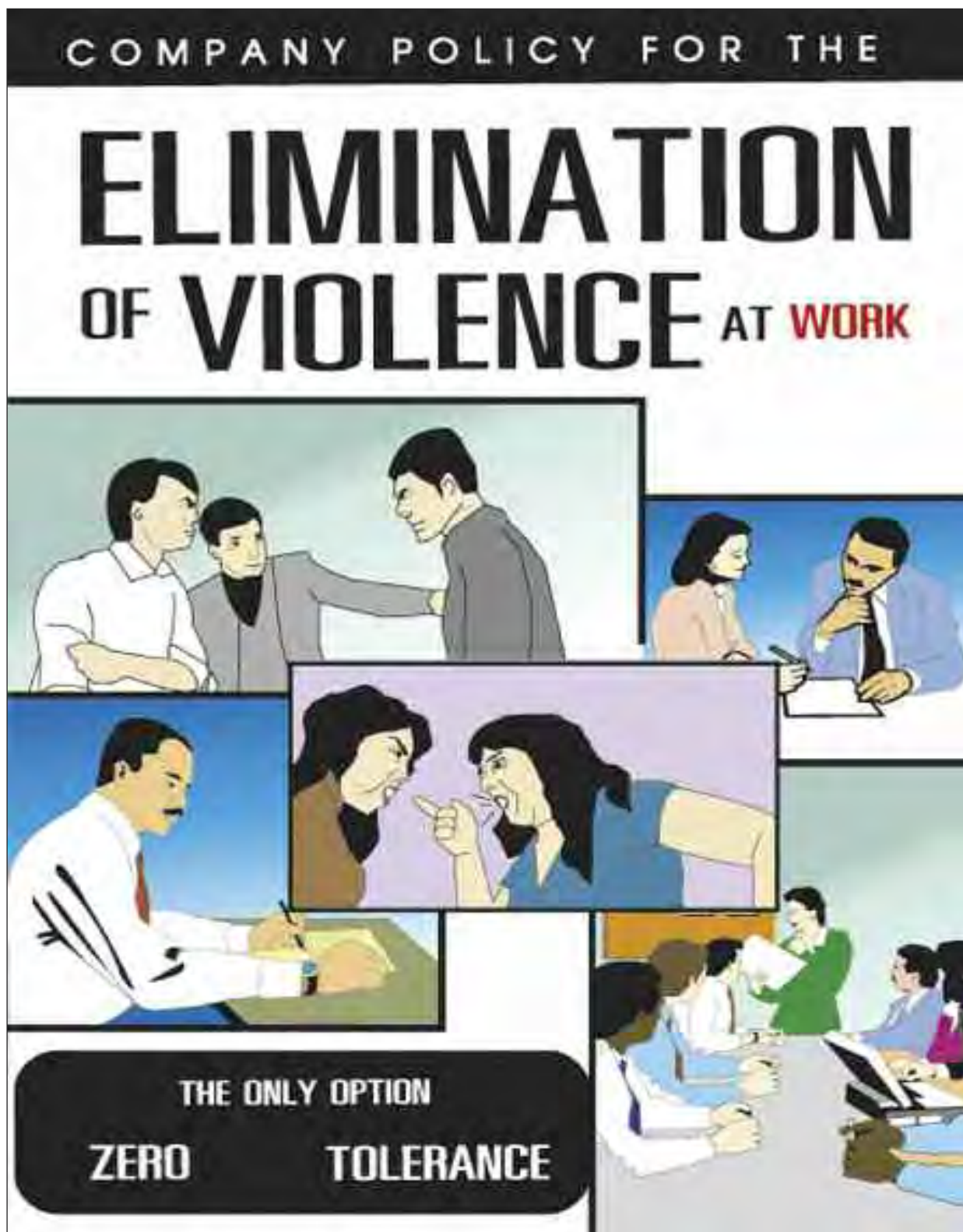


Figure 36. Establish and implement a workplace policy to prevent and deal appropriately with offensive behaviour such as bullying, mobbing, harassment, threats and violence. The policy should include clear procedures about how to prevent and deal with different cases of offensive behaviour, and how to help the victims of offensive behaviour.



## CHECKPOINT 37

Organize training in, and raise awareness of, respectable behaviour.

### WHY

- Offensive behaviour, when it exists, becomes embedded in the daily culture, language and behaviour of the workplace. This means that the only way to ensure respectable behaviour is through the awareness of all employees.
- A concerted effort in training and awareness-raising will not only help reduce the occurrence of offensive behaviour but also signal general support for respectable behaviour in the workplace.
- Respectable behaviour throughout the workplace will increase the likelihood that customers and clients are treated with kindness and respect.
- Raising awareness of what constitutes respectable behaviour will decrease the risk of interpersonal conflict and role conflicts at work.
- When workers are treated with respect, there will be lower rates of absenteeism, intention to quit work and labour turnover.

### HOW

1. Training in respectable behaviour should be an integral part of the general introduction to the workplace.
2. Workers should be aware of the types of offensive behaviour which can exist in the workplace and their long-term consequences.
3. A policy against bullying, mobbing, harassment, threats and violence at work should be firmly upheld in the workplace and communicated clearly to all.
4. Workers should be trained in spotting offensive behaviour and rewarded for informing an appropriate person when such behaviour takes place.

5. There should be clear punitive sanctions against any offender who is an employee of the enterprise. In serious cases, legal steps should be taken.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- There should be a clear policy on dealing with any case in which a supervisor is the offender. In such a case, the victim should be able to go to a union representative or directly to a higher level of management.
- In any workplace where offensive behaviour is frequent, it is helpful to train special workers' representatives in dealing with offensive behaviour, mediation and conflict resolution.
- Training and awareness-raising with regard to respectable behaviour at work could also have the positive effect of influencing behaviour outside work, such as in the family and neighbourhood.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

A workplace in which employees at all levels treat each other with respect will give the enterprise a good reputation in the community. This will make it easier to recruit employees with good behaviour and avoid high turnover.



**Figure 37a. Train managers and workers in respectable behaviour as an integral part of the general introduction to the workplace.**



**Figure 37b. Examine workplace conditions conducive to preventing offensive behaviour as part of training about stress prevention. Group discussion about these conditions is always useful.**

## CHECKPOINT 38

Establish procedures and action models to deal with violence, abuse and harassment at work.

### WHY

- Violence, abuse and harassment at work usually occur unexpectedly. It is important that there be procedures in place which function to prevent and stop offensive behaviour when it occurs.
- Such procedures should be formulated in consultation with those who have expertise and experience in the field, and with the participation of the workers.
- Violence, bullying and harassment are very different types of behaviour which usually require different types of response in the workplace. Appropriate responses should be clearly defined in workplace procedures.
- When offensive behaviour takes place, established procedures must facilitate impartial and fair action, and support the equal and fair treatment of all workers.

### HOW

1. Workplace procedures should explain how to:
  - help the victim;
  - react to the offender;
  - prevent new cases;
  - learn from the incident.
2. In severe cases of threat, violence or harassment, legal steps should be taken if the law is violated.
3. The victim of offensive behaviour may develop physical or mental illness due to the incident. They should receive help and support, if possible from an appropriately qualified professional.
4. If the offender is an employee, the workplace should respond with clear punitive disciplinary actions. In a severe case, the offender should be dismissed.

5. The procedures should include rules for informing other employees about the response taken.
6. The procedures should also include an obligation on workers to report cases of offensive behaviour to management.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- If the enterprise responds without hesitation to every case of offensive behaviour, the employees will feel valued and respected. This will enhance their commitment and motivation.
- The ideal tolerance level for offensive behaviour is zero, but sometimes it is not possible to attain this. A good workplace which does not tolerate offensive behaviour can be identified by two indicators: a low level of offensive behaviour, and swift and firm punitive action on every incident when it occurs.
- The worst-case scenario is a case in which the offended person has to leave the workplace while the offender keeps his or her job. This would clearly impact very negatively upon the work climate.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Offensive behaviour in the workplace has been increasing in many countries during the last 10–15 years. This development can only be counteracted if management, workers and other bodies such as the labour inspectorate work together and take tough measures to reduce violence, harassment and bullying at work.



**Figure 38a. Establish procedures and action models to deal with violence, abuse and harassment at work, and make the procedures and models known to all managers and workers.**



**Figure 38b. Train workers in the procedures to deal with potential offenders, help victims and prevent new cases.**

## CHECKPOINT 39

Provide rapid and culturally sensitive interventions to help those involved in offensive behaviour.

### WHY

- If the victim of offensive behaviour in the workplace is not assisted, there is a high risk they will develop negative health effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or other stress-related illness.
- When the victim is not assisted, this gives an indirect signal of acceptance of the offensive behaviour in the workplace, which could encourage further offensive behaviour.
- If the victim is given assistance in the workplace, this will give the other workers a clear signal that the workplace is a responsible one and that the workers are valued.
- Intervention should be culturally sensitive. In some cultures, becoming victim to some forms of offensive behaviour is associated with shame or guilt.
- In borderline cases, the offender may not be aware of the way in which his or her behaviour is perceived by the person offended. In such cases, the best intervention may be to provide information to the offender.

### HOW

1. The type of intervention depends on the culture of the country and people involved, the type of offensive behaviour and the resources of the workplace. Culturally sensitive rules should be formulated and applied.
2. In all cases, the best form of intervention is good social and psychological support from co-workers, supervisors and management for the person offended.
3. In some situations, it may be relevant and possible to provide professional assistance to the offended person. When offering such assistance, always stress that it is voluntary (the offended person has the right to accept or not) and that assistance will be cost-free to the victims.

4. The offender should be reprimanded according to the type and seriousness of the offence. A response may be necessary even in some mild cases where the offender may not be aware that his or her behaviour (e.g. jokes, gestures or remarks) is perceived as offensive.
5. In severe cases (e.g., bank robbery), it may be necessary to move the victim or victims to another job without frequent customer contact.
6. In cases of harassment and bullying from a colleague, it may be necessary to ensure that the offended person and the offender no longer work in the same work unit.

### SOME MORE HINTS

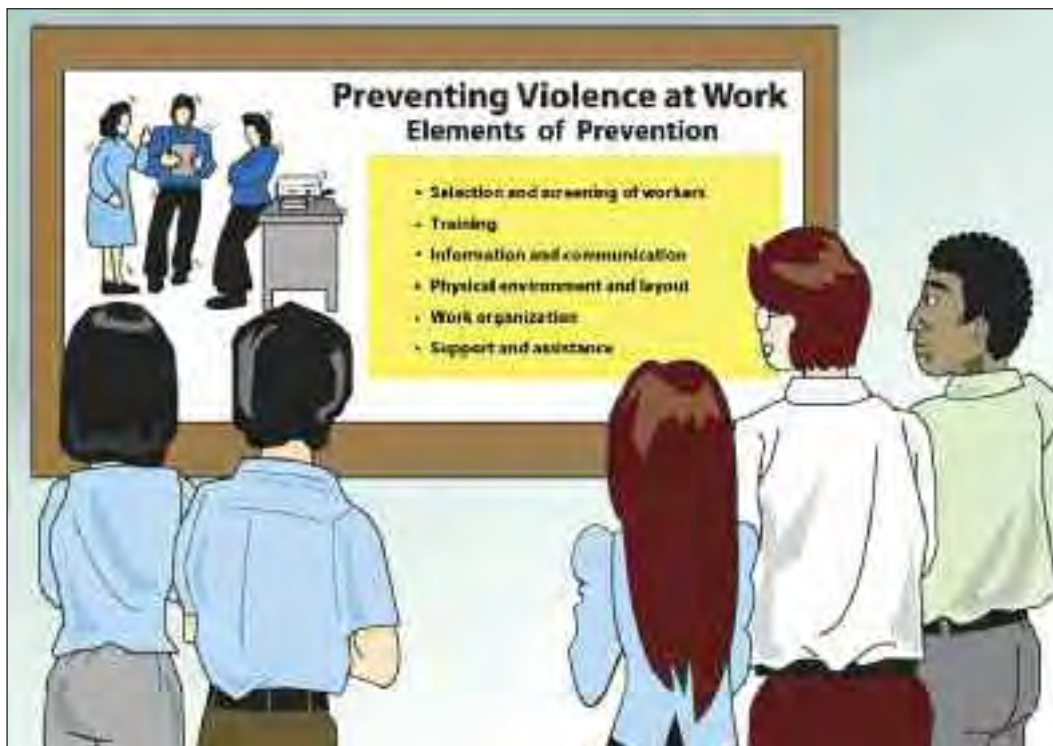
- Supervisors and managers are role models. Therefore they should always provide support and encouragement to the offended person in the workplace.
- A person who is not supported by supervisors or colleagues may feel that he or she “deserves” the offensive behaviour. A psychological reaction like this can arise when the offended person tries to “make sense” of the behaviour.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Offensive behaviour constitutes a threat to the self-esteem and health of the offended person. This is why it is so important to assist the victim in the best and most appropriate way. They may have no signs or symptoms of ill health. Still, assistance should be provided rapidly and without expense to the victim.



**Figure 39a.** Train workers, supervisors and managers in appropriate forms of intervention in the event of offensive behaviour, including social and psychological support for the offended person.



**Figure 39b.** Be aware of the need to provide culturally sensitive support appropriate to the local situation of the workplace. Remember that supervisors and managers are role models.

## CHECKPOINT 40

Organize working areas to protect workers against violence from clients and outsiders.

### WHY

- Violence at some workplaces, particularly in service industries, is more likely to be initiated by customers, clients or other outsiders than by insiders.
- Research shows that taking simple precautions with the physical layout and equipment in the workplace may reduce the occurrence of violence from outsiders.
- Some groups at high risk of such violence are health-care workers at psychiatric and emergency wards, police officers, prison personnel, bus and taxi drivers, door keepers, and those who work alone or at night.
- Violence and threats of violence are increasingly an issue for workplaces in many countries of the world, and it is difficult to provide primary prevention through changing public attitudes and behaviour.
- Violence and threats of violence have serious effects on physical and mental health. In extreme cases, violence at work leads to death.

### HOW

1. Prevention of violence through organization of the working area should take into consideration the special risks inherent in the specific workplace. Working alone during the night should be avoided, for instance.
2. Prevention of violence at work should be based on a thorough analysis of high-risk situations, groups and occupations.
3. Each worker should have, as appropriate, an escape route, easy access to an alarm system, video surveillance, separation from customers, or be protected by other devices designed to protect them from violence.

4. The design of the workplace should take into consideration the existence of special risk groups such as psychiatric patients, customers who have been taking drugs or excessive amounts of alcohol, or criminals. Police assistance should be within easy reach in the event of an adverse encounter with such people.
5. Threatening behaviour by outsiders should not be taken lightly. Even if no physical violence takes place, it should be made clear that threatening behaviour is not acceptable. Video recordings may help to document such cases.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Safety precautions in the workplace should be discussed with relevant experts. Good and continuous contact with the police and other authorities should be given high priority.
- All employees, including newcomers, part-time workers and temporary workers, should be well informed about the risks of violence.
- All workers should be trained in taking safety precautions and other safety measures against violence at work and using safety arrangements such as escape routes.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

It is important to learn from other workplaces with similar problems. Practical examples of protection against violence greatly assist workers and supervisors to take effective measures to protect against violence in their own workplace.



**Figure 40a. Train workers in the prevention of violence from clients and other outsiders, including how to use the safety measures installed in the working area.**



**Figure 40b. Inform all employees, including newcomers, part-time workers and temporary workers, about the risks of violence and precautions to be taken against violence.**





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## Job security

Job insecurity is an important factor leading to stress at work. Lack of guaranteed employment in the long term, precarious forms of contracts and fluctuating employment conditions are known to be factors increasing work stress. They make it difficult to maintain commitment to good work performance and good human relations, and affect the health and well-being of workers. Measures to increase job security need to be taken within the context of improving employment conditions. Attention is drawn to the following measures, among others:

- increasing the possibility of stable employment;
- clear statement of employment conditions;
- regular wages and benefits;
- ensuring fair parental leave;
- protecting the rights of workers and their representatives.

Clarity, in both employment conditions and measures to increase employment stability, is important for reducing stress at work.

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## CHECKPOINT 41

Plan work in such a way as to enhance the possibility of stable employment.

### WHY

- Unstable employment arrangements, without a guarantee of continued and fair employment conditions, make it difficult to maintain commitment to good work performance. This increases work-related stress.
- Job insecurity associated with unclear prospects of stable employment is known to lead to anxiety and other stress-related symptoms. It is necessary to take measures to guarantee stable employment in the long term.
- Workers in precarious forms of employment are affected by socio-economic conditions and are often prone to stress in the workplace. Nevertheless, support at the workplace level is necessary and useful to increase the possibility of stable employment.

### HOW

1. As a means of ensuring job security, provide long-term contracts of employment where possible. Avoid unnecessary short-term contracts.
2. Make employment contracts as long as feasibly possible.
3. The parties concerned should make joint efforts to reduce precarious employment in accordance with developments in employment conditions.
4. Conduct regular discussions among managers and workers and their representatives on enhancing the possibility of more stable forms of employment contracts.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Create regular and stable jobs whenever employment situations allow.
- Make future plans regarding employment status known to all workers.
- Collaborate with agencies concerned and employers' and workers' organizations to reduce job insecurity through transparent mechanisms.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Enhance the possibility of stable employment through the joint efforts of management and workers.



**Figure 41a. Collaborate with agencies concerned and employers' and workers' organizations to reduce job insecurity through transparent mechanisms and stable contracts.**



**Figure 41b. Have regular consultations among managers and workers about enhancing the possibility of more stable forms of employment contracts.**

## CHECKPOINT 42

Provide a written job contract with clear statements concerning employment conditions and wages.

### WHY

- Clarity in employment contracts about employment conditions, payment of wages, working conditions and fair treatment of workers is important. Contract conditions must be in line with legal requirements and developments in national employment policies.
- Clear clauses concerning employment periods and working conditions are indispensable in any employment contracts. The contractual guarantee of fair treatment and clarity on working conditions are important prerequisites for reducing work stress.
- Joint efforts by managers and workers to improve working conditions are greatly assisted by clarity in employment contracts. Contracts should include clear clauses which ensure decent working conditions and fair treatment without any discriminatory measures.

### HOW

1. In any contract of employment, always include clear clauses stating employment status, period and conditions.
2. Make it clear in employment contracts that those in short-term jobs, temporary workers, migrant workers and part-time workers are treated equally in terms of working conditions and safety and health at work.
3. Communicate clearly through employment contracts and regular management–worker consultation that every effort is being taken to improve working conditions and protect safety and health at work.
4. Make joint efforts with agencies concerned and employers' and workers' organizations to establish clear contracts with all workers.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Discuss with workers and their representatives the fairness and clarity of employment contracts. Take necessary measures to include clear clauses about working conditions in every contract.
- Establish a transparent mechanism to deal with complaints about employment and working conditions. This should be in line with a stated policy on fair treatment for all.
- Train managers, supervisors and workers in the fair treatment of all workers and joint action to improve working conditions.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Written job contracts with clear clauses concerning employment status, period and conditions (including wages) are important prerequisites for stress prevention at work.



**Figure 42a. Communicate clearly through employment contracts employment conditions, payment of wages, working conditions and the fair treatment of workers.**



**Figure 42b. Always include in a contract of employment clear statements on employment status, period and conditions.**

## CHECKPOINT 43

Ensure that wages are paid regularly and benefits are provided according to the relevant contract.

### WHY

- Lack of clarity about wages and benefits and their payment increases work stress. This must be avoided by communicating clearly how wages are calculated and paid.
- Regular payment of wages and benefits is an important aspect of sound employment conditions.
- The nature and extent of compensation for overtime work is sometimes unclear and becomes a source of work stress. Transparency regarding payment for overtime is indispensable.
- Acknowledging employees' efforts by means of wages and benefits should be done fairly and without discrimination. Transparency in the payment of wages and benefits, and regular consultations with workers and their representatives, are important.

### HOW

1. Ensure regular payment of wages and benefits according to relevant employment contracts.
2. Clearly communicate with workers how their wages and benefits are calculated and paid. Make it a clear policy to treat all workers fairly in terms of wages and benefits, and ensure their regular payment.
3. Consult with workers regularly on how to secure fair wage levels and acknowledge their efforts.
4. Examine the effects of wage systems such as piece-work payment or precarious forms of employment on workers' safety and health. Make joint efforts to prevent adverse effects on safety and health, and to improve both wage systems and working conditions.
5. Compensate for overtime work properly and in a timely manner.

6. Consult workers in advance about changes to wage systems.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Provide an error-free pay slip for every wage payment.
- Make known to all workers future plans for changes to jobs or wage systems.
- Join with worker representatives to study possibilities for improving wage systems, and avoiding unfair treatment of and discrimination against workers.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Ensure that wages are paid regularly and benefits are provided according to relevant contracts.



**Figure 43. Communicate with workers clearly how their wages and benefits are calculated and paid. Make it a clear policy to treat all workers fairly in terms of wages and benefits.**



## CHECKPOINT 44

Ensure job security for workers taking parental leave.

### WHY

- Workers taking parental leave according to their entitlement sometimes feel insecure about their return to their jobs. Ensuring job security for these workers is essential.
- When a worker returns to work after parental leave, it is important to treat the worker fairly and take measures to support the worker return to work, safely and without difficulty.
- Protection of workers who take parental leave must be observed in all workplaces. It is usually difficult to secure such protection in informal sectors and precarious employment situations. The joint efforts of social partners are therefore necessary to ensure job security for all workers who take parental leave.

### HOW

1. Measures should be taken to protect the employment conditions and security of workers who take parental leave, according to laws and regulations, and collective agreements. Relevant conditions include entitlement to parental leave and job security on return to work.
2. Ensure that any worker returning from parental leave is entitled to resume the job from which they took leave. In the case of transfer to another job, the consent of the worker concerned should be obtained and arrangements made to maintain her or his employment status.
3. Secure time for feeding children as well as associated childcare for workers returning to work after parental leave.
4. Make sure that workers taking parental leave are not disadvantaged in their career development.
5. When difficulties arise (for example, for health reasons) for a worker returning from parental leave, make joint efforts to accommodate the worker's needs by offering alternative work.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- When measures are taken to accommodate the health status of workers returning from parental leave, provide adequate training.
- Make every effort to ensure the equality of women and men with respect to continued employment. Job security for workers taking parental leave should be observed as part of policy in this regard.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Make special efforts to ensure job security for workers returning to work after parental leave.



Figure 44a. Ensure that workers returning from parental leave are entitled to resume the job from which they took leave.



Figure 44b. Secure time for breastfeeding and associated childcare for women workers returning from maternity leave.

## CHECKPOINT 45

Enhance job security and protect workers and their representatives from unfair dismissal.

### WHY

- Job insecurity is often related to a lack of active trade union involvement in protecting the employment status of workers. In such circumstances, it is important to encourage and protect worker representatives who make particular and appropriate efforts to increase job security as a basic human right.
- Protection of workers' representatives from unfair dismissal is an extremely important aspect of observing the principles of freedom of association. It is therefore essential to protect the employment status of workers' representatives against anti-union action.
- It is important to promote activities in the workplace which reduce job insecurity for all workers, but particularly for those in more precarious forms of employment. These workers feel more insecure about keeping their jobs and about improving their employment status and working conditions. Joint efforts are needed to enhance job security through collective bargaining and regular consultation.

### HOW

1. Establish a clear policy to enhance job security and protect workers' rights as part of corporate social responsibility.
2. Respect the rights of workers to collective bargaining and collective agreement on measures to enhance job security. Consult workers' representatives regularly about job security issues and future plans, and ensure workers' participation in the discussion.
3. Ensure that the rights of workers' representatives are protected. In particular, it is essential that workers' representatives be protected against unfair dismissal as a result of their actions to enhance job security for workers.

4. Work jointly with workers' representatives to enhance job security for workers, particularly those in precarious forms of employment. This should be in line with the protection of workers' rights to improved working conditions and freedom of association.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Learn from exemplary measures taken in other enterprises to enhance job security, including measures targeted to short-term, temporary, migrant and part-time workers.
- Encourage communication between managers and workers, and among workers with different employment status, about possible measures to reduce job insecurity.
- Hold meetings with employers' and workers' organizations to discuss effective programmes for enhancing job security and improving employment and working conditions. These organizations can be expected to take an active role, especially concerning precarious jobs.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Establish clear policies to enhance job security and respect the rights of workers and their representatives with regard to their employment conditions.



**Figure 45. Engage in regular collective bargaining including measures to enhance job security for workers. Consult workers' representatives regularly about job security issues.**



## Information and communication

Active exchange of information and communication in the workplace benefits both management and workers. Open communication facilitates collaboration as well as the detection and solution of workplace problems. In creating a positive atmosphere at work, coherent teamwork is promoted. Workers informed about important decisions play an active role in achieving mutually agreed goals. In this way, workplace problems which are often linked with increased stress at work can be more promptly detected and effectively solved. Open communication is particularly facilitated by:

- going to the workplace and talking with workers;
- maintaining daily and easy communication between supervisors and workers;
- informing workers of important decisions;
- informing top management of workers' opinions;
- giving workers any plans to bring about change.

The general feeling of belonging and sharing the same goal contributes to prevention and reduction of work stress.

## CHECKPOINT 46

Make it a rule for managers to go to the workplace and talk with the workers.

### WHY

- By talking to the workers, managers show their interest in daily production at the shop floor level.
- Personal conversation makes it possible for workers to alert management to any personal problems they may have, such as health-related or family issues.
- Frequent talks with the workers provide opportunities for managers to show their appreciation and give workers their feedback.
- Managers will learn more about the production process, organizational problems and issues concerning collaboration by talking to the workers than by sitting in their offices.
- By talking to the workers, managers may detect cases of bullying, mobbing, harassment or other forms of offensive behaviour taking place in the workplace.

### HOW

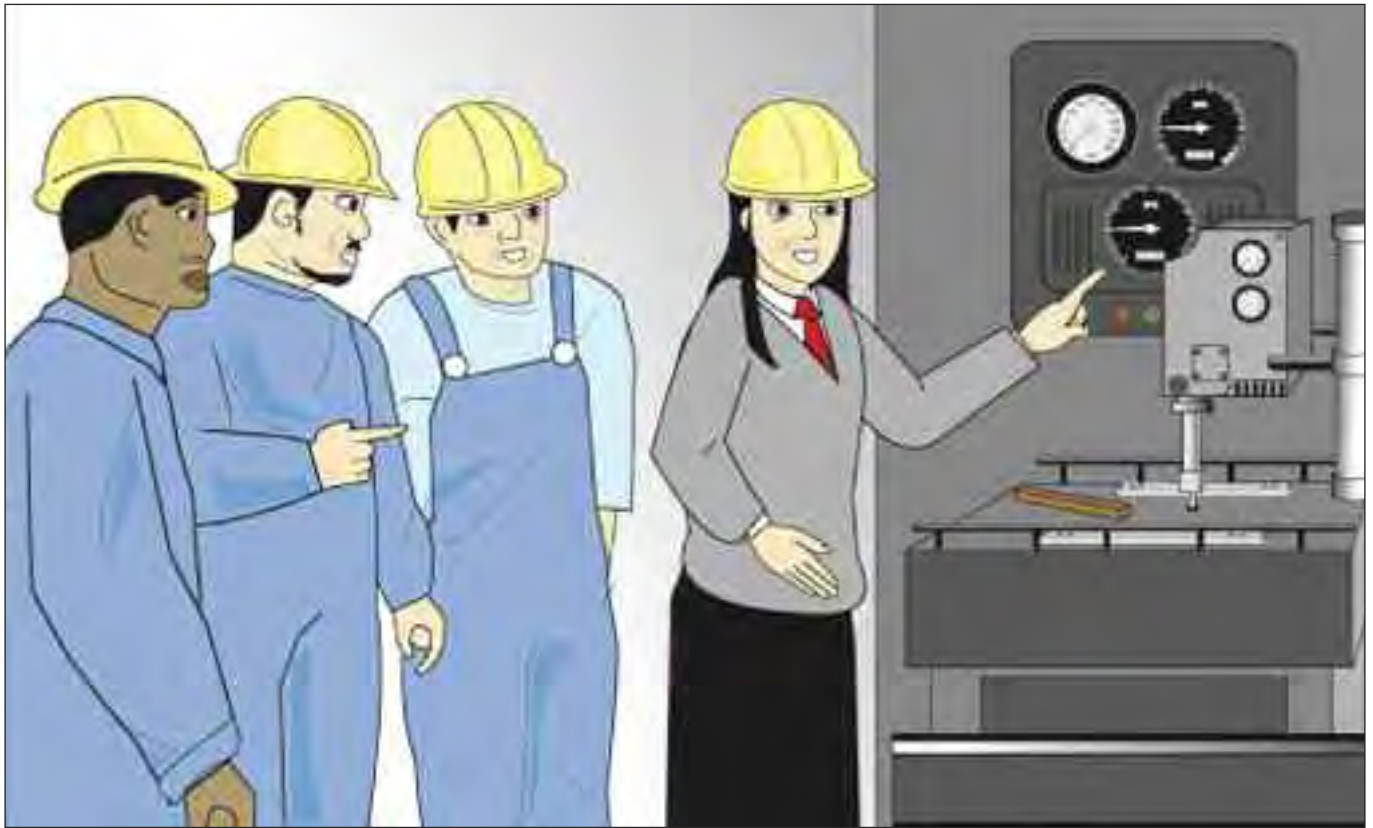
1. It is most important for managers to get away from their desk or office and show interest in the daily work in the workplace.
2. One possibility is to go to the workplace every morning and say hello to every worker – a good sign of respect and appreciation.
3. Managers also have the duty of making sure that work is performed safely and without health risks. A safety walk-around provides a good opportunity for managers to communicate with the workers about work-related topics.
4. Talking to the workers provides opportunities for managers to ask for suggestions on how to improve productivity and production quality. Workers often have good ideas based on their everyday experiences.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- Poorly functioning machines, computers, tools or other equipment may be the main cause of poor job satisfaction. In the case of workers' complaints, it is very important to take action to improve the equipment.
- Workers may have questions or doubts concerning the best way to perform their work. Clarifying these issues will support them in their daily work.
- If workers have conflicting or unclear work roles, the manager has an obligation to solve the problem.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Daily communication at the shop floor level benefits workers as well as management. Through such communication, workers gain support and management gains valuable feedback and ideas.



**Figure 46. Encourage managers to go to the workplace and talk with the workers. Create an open environment in which workers feel free to exchange opinions with the managers.**



## CHECKPOINT 47

Ensure that supervisors communicate easily and frequently with workers concerning any problems.

### WHY

- When supervisors talk frequently with the workers, daily problems concerning work will be solved quickly. This in turn will reduce waste and enhance productivity.
- Frequent and easy communication between supervisors and workers will create a supportive and positive atmosphere at the shop floor level of the workplace.
- When a supervisor has frequent talks with the workers it will be easy to correct errors and improve the quality of products and services.
- Good communication with the workers will make it possible for supervisors to detect and correct problems with regard to the physical work environment (e.g., noise, chemicals, heat and light).
- Frequent communication between workers and supervisors will ensure that workers' suggestions and ideas can be brought forward and considered by management.

### HOW

1. Each supervisor should make a daily round of their department to make face-to-face contact with all the workers.
2. A good supervisor should be a good listener. If the supervisor shows interest in and respect for individual workers under his or her supervision, workers will feel confident and be at ease with their supervisor.
3. Supervisors should encourage workers to use the right tools and equipment in an appropriate way. In this way, safety can be improved and health problems such as musculoskeletal problems may be avoided.
4. A supervisor should give special attention to new workers and those with special health problems or in need of special training. The right fit between workers and tasks will improve workers' well-being as well as the productivity of the enterprise.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- The supervisor should always respect workers' privacy. Information concerning a worker's health, personal problems or family matters should not be forwarded to others without the explicit consent of the worker.
- When workers inform the supervisor about problems relating to their work it is very important that action be taken promptly to alleviate the problems in a proper manner. In all cases, workers should receive feedback from the supervisor so that they can see that their problems are being treated seriously.
- When communicating with workers, the supervisor should make every effort to stop teasing, gossip or slander in the workplace.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Daily and easy communication between supervisors and workers is one of the most effective ways to create a supportive and positive atmosphere at work. Effort should be made to help workers always feel appreciated and respected at their workplace.



**Figure 47a. Require supervisors to make a daily round of their department to make face-to-face contact with all the workers.**



**Figure 47b. In daily communication, show special attention to new workers, workers with special health problems or those in need of special training.**

## CHECKPOINT 48

Inform workers regularly about important decisions, using adequate means.

### WHY

- Workers will be more motivated and engaged if they are well informed about important decisions concerning resources, production and market conditions.
- Trust is built between workers and management when workers feel well informed about decisions that influence their daily work.
- When workers are well informed about relevant plans for the future, stress and uncertainty can be reduced.
- Informing workers about important decisions is an important sign of respect for them. The quality of work will be improved.
- Communication about the goals and strategies of the company is an important way of giving meaning to work.

### HOW

1. Choose the right form of communication for each piece of information:
  - *Must know.* Choose oral communication plus written documents to back up the message. Provide opportunities for questions and further explanation.
  - *Should know.* Choose written communication plus signboards and posters.
  - *Could know.* Use electronic communication, handbooks, pamphlets, etc.

In all cases, the means of communication should take into consideration workers' competencies and training with regard to reading, writing, the use of electronic communication, and so on.

2. If management has not made a final decision, inform the workers of the probable date on which the decision will be made. This is a good way to counteract rumour and uncertainty.
3. Use middle managers to give workers relevant information, because they know the workers best. Middle managers should do so in the most appropriate manner.
4. Avoid information overload. If workers are overloaded with information, the relevant pieces will "drown" and not be noticed.
5. Always consider the timing, relevance, form and content of communication with the workers. Managers and supervisors should take care with the content and style of communication. Even what is omitted, and body language, will be interpreted by the recipient.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- Always remember that communication should consider workers' social and cultural norms, religious beliefs and habits. Some types of written communication, drawings, or language may be considered offensive by some members of staff.
- Avoid using irony, sarcasm and so on when communicating. Communication should be clear and without any form of "double meaning".

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

Communication is the "glue" that holds the enterprise together.



**Figure 48. Inform workers regularly about important decisions, using adequate means. Use various forms of communication, such as signboards and posters, to inform workers of matters they should know about.**

## CHECKPOINT 49

Inform top management of the opinions of the workers.

### WHY

- It is important that top management have a correct picture of the opinions and attitudes of the workers. This makes it possible for them to make informed decisions about the workplace.
- Correct information about the opinions and attitudes of the workers is critical if managers are not to be misled by misunderstanding and stereotypes.
- Workers often have very relevant and precise information about problems and challenges in the workplace. Using this information is a good way to improve the quality of work and productivity.
- When workers know that their opinions are heard by the management – in particular, by the top level management – it increases their self-confidence, commitment and motivation. When workers' opinions and grievances are presented to top management it increases their feeling of being supported by their supervisors.

### HOW

1. Middle managers can learn about workers' attitudes through regular meetings in which daily work is discussed.
2. Top management should use systematic channels for learning about the attitudes and concerns of the workers. Supervisors play an important role since they have direct contact with workers.
3. Channels should be established to enable workers to express their attitudes, experiences and suggestions, whether directly or through their supervisors and managers.
4. Workers should always receive feedback when they have put forward suggestions or points of criticism. Openly expressed criticism should be considered a resource for improvement and not a problem.

5. Workers' opinions may also be registered through internal mail boxes, signboards or questionnaires.

### SOME MORE HINTS

- It is a good idea to show workers that criticism is appreciated and taken seriously. This creates an atmosphere of trust and respect.
- Actively engaged and critical workers should be regarded as a resource and not a problem in the workplace.
- Feedback from workers can be used to correct procedures and adjust new initiatives if necessary in the workplace. Supervisors should be attentive to such feedback.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

It is very important to maintain open communication between top managers and workers on the floor. If this communication is blocked, it will lead to a poor climate in the workplace and lower productivity.



**Figure 49a.** Use systematic channels for learning about workers' attitudes and concerns, and discuss results with supervisors and workers.



**Figure 49b.** Use feedback from workers to correct procedures and adjust new initiatives if necessary in the workplace.

## CHECKPOINT 50

Give workers relevant information about future plans and changes.

### WHY

- At modern workplaces, change has become the rule rather than the exception. This increases the need for information to be disseminated about any plans for change.
- Giving workers sufficient and relevant information about plans for change in the workplace is a way of showing them respect.
- Lack of information about plans for the future creates rumour and uncertainty – a major source of stress.
- If major changes are implemented without informing the workers, this will lead to a general feeling of powerlessness and frustration as well as lack of trust in management.

### HOW

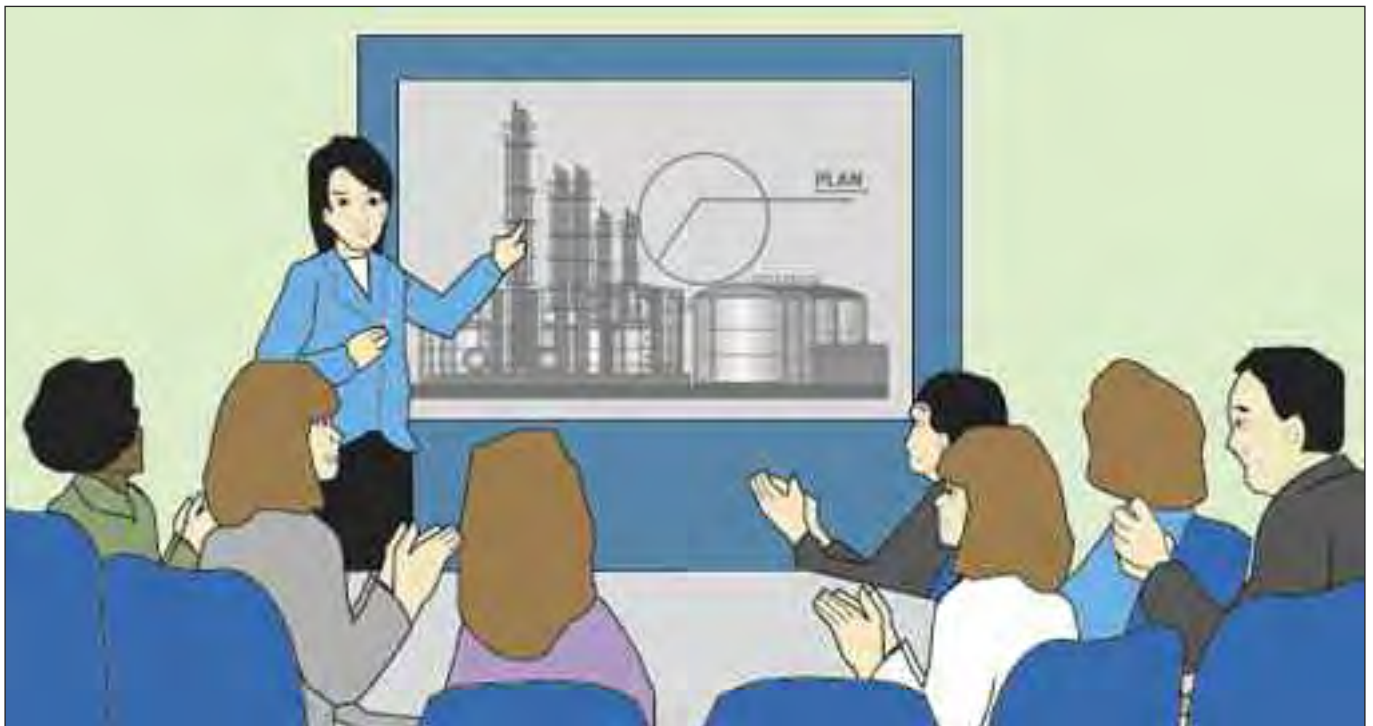
1. Workers are mainly interested in plans for the future to the extent that they involve changes to their own work and employment conditions. Therefore it is important to inform workers about the consequences for each individual of plans for the future.
2. All information should be easy to understand and phrased in an appropriate way. Not all workers may have the same level of literacy, even in countries where education levels are generally high.
3. Management should inform workers directly about major changes. In some cases it will be appropriate to disseminate information through supervisors.
4. Regular, internal means of communication should always be encouraged. These could be electronic- or paper-based, or signboards, etc., depending on the nature of the information, and the culture of the country and workplace.

## SOME MORE HINTS

- If the workers feel that management withholds important and relevant information it will reduce the climate of trust and motivation in the workplace.
- The provision of relevant information about pending changes and plans for the future will make it easier for workers and supervisors to contribute by putting forward their own ideas and suggestions.
- With information about plans for the future, workers can better prepare to reconcile demands on them from the workplace and the family.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER

If the workers are informed about the purpose and goal of pending changes, the general feeling of belonging and trust will be increased.



**Figure 50a. Provide information directly to the workers about major changes in business operations and work organization.**



**Figure 50b. Provide regular opportunities for informing workers about the purpose and goal of pending changes in business operation and work organization. This will increase the general feeling of belonging and trust.**



