

Mental Health – Recognizing Psychological Health and Safety Hazards Fact Sheets



WHAT IS A PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACE?

The CSA Standard Z1003-13 (R2018) “Psychological health and safety in the workplace – Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation” defines a psychologically healthy and safe workplace as a “workplace that promotes workers’ psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways.” Psychological health is related to mental health, which is also defined in Z1003 as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” This definition references the World Health Organization, who note that in this positive sense, mental health is the foundation of well-being and effective functioning for an individual and for a community.

Thirteen organizational factors that impact organizational health, the health of individual employees and the financial bottom line, including the way work is carried out and the context in which work occurs risk are outlined in the Z1003.

How can psychological hazards be recognized?

In general, inspections are one way to observe the workplace for items or situations that may cause harm. While during a health and safety inspection, unsafe situations can be noted, for example, if a machine needs repair, or if items are misplaced.

Similarly, items relating to psychological health and safety can be noted as well. By listening and through observation, worker concerns or complaints that are heard or seen during workplace inspections can be noted as items for follow-up. For example, it may be appropriate to ask employees about the stressors they experience at work.

The process should be confidential whenever possible. If there are areas of concern, these items should be reported to the supervisor or delegated person. In some situations, you may need to consider if situations noted are “just a bad day” or if it is something more.

However, it is not the inspection team’s or health and safety committee member’s duty to fully assess if psychological hazards are present, nor should they make a diagnosis about a person’s state of mental health. Team members can use observational and conversational skills to note if there is an area of potential concern where further discussion may be necessary.

What are examples of items to note?

The examples outlined below do not list all the possible items for psychological hazards. Adapt this checklist for your workplace's specific needs.

Sample Checklist for Psychological Hazards		
Area of concern	Examples	Follow-up Suggested? (Yes/No)
Pace of work	Discussion with or observation of employees who may mention work scheduling issues Workload (too much/too little), comments made such as "I never have time to take my breaks" or "I always work through lunch" or "I don't have enough work to do" Observing actions including rushing to complete tasks or taking shortcuts.	
Fatigue	Hours of work mentioned. Feeling or looking tired.	
Conflicting demands	Comments made such as "I don't know which item to work on first" or "I have so many priority projects, I don't know if I will get them all finished in time" Comments about little or no participation in decision making	
Hours of work	Working extra time (paid or unpaid) to complete work, including working through breaks or lunch, after or before scheduled hours, on days off, etc.	
Work environment	Issues that interrupt concentration are mentioned, as well as other hazards including ergonomic set up, indoor air quality, noise, etc.	
Working in conflict with others	Comments made such as "That person does not speak to me the same way as they do to others", "I have to be careful what I say" or "I don't feel I can raise that issue with that person"	
Working in social isolation	Comments made such as "I'd be the last person to know" or "I'm never told that" Comments about communication or function/dysfunction of the group	
Working alone	Concerns about communication methods, fear for safety	
Poor communication	Comments regarding not knowing about something, lack of feedback, no response, receiving only negative comments, etc.	
Relating to management, policies, organization of work, etc.	Comments that suggest inappropriate and unfair decisions around work policies and rules—for example approval (or no approval) regarding leaves or training requests Lack of opportunities for training or professional growth Comments regarding uncertainty about the individual's role	
Other:		