**Job Characteristics, Design & Management Guidelines**

This guideline provides examples of control measures for psychosocial hazards related to job characteristics, design and management, and the working environment and equipment including:

* high or low job demands
* low job control
* poor support
* traumatic events or material
* remote or isolated work
* lack of role clarity
* poor organisational change management
* inadequate recognition
* poor organisational justice, and
* poor environmental conditions.

However, it is not an exhaustive list and you should use the process outlined in [**Hazard Management Procedure (14)**](https://cshwsa.org.au/download/820/?tmstv=1721800605) to ensure you identify all hazards in your workplace and assess and control the associated risks.

A single or irregular exposure to these hazards may not create psychosocial risks, or the risks may be very low. However, if workers’ exposure to a hazard (or a combination of these hazards) is frequent, prolonged or severe it can cause psychological and physical harm.

The controls provided are examples. You must consider what is reasonably practicable to eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace.

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# Job demands

Sustained or intense high levels of physical, mental or emotional effort which are unreasonable or chronically exceed workers’ skills, or sustained low levels of physical, mental or emotional effort. A job can include periods of high and low job demands. A job can also involve a combination of low or high mental, emotional and physical demands.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

High physical demands may include:

* long, irregular or unpredictable workhours (e.g. doing shift work or being on call)
* insufficient breaks (e.g. breaks are infrequent, too short, strictly scheduled or regularly interrupted)
* not being able to recover between periods of work (e.g. being expected to work after hours, be on call, or return to work with insufficient rest and sleep)
* not having opportunities to use leave entitlements.
* high workloads (e.g. having too much to do)
* physically demanding, challenging or tiring work (e.g. undertaking hazardous manual tasks or strenuous physical tasks), and
* time pressures or fast paced work (e.g. unreasonable deadlines or computer/machine paced work).

High mental or cognitive demands may include:

* complex tasks frequently or severely exceeding a worker’s capacity or competency (e.g. workers’ lack the training, resources, skills, authority or experience to reasonably or successfully do tasks)
* sustained levels of concentration or vigilance particularly when accuracy is required or workers are looking for infrequent events (e.g. long-distance driving or security monitoring)
* work where errors may have high reputational, legal, career, safety or financial risks (e.g. air traffic control, medical care or decisions affecting a large number of people)
* absence of systems to prevent individual errors (e.g. relying on workers to memorise information or perform manual calculations without checks), and
* repeatedly or rapidly switching tasks so it is difficult to concentrate and complete tasks (e.g. being frequently interrupted or having to do numerous things at once).

High emotional demands may include:

* responding to distressing or emotional situations (e.g. dealing with confrontation)
* managing other people’s emotions (e.g. de‑escalating an aggressive situation, undertaking disciplinary processes or assisting people who are distressed)
* providing support or empathy (e.g. conveying bad news, providing advocacy or counselling), and
* suppressing emotions or displaying false emotions (e.g. nursing staff hiding distress for patients or retail workers pretending friendliness with difficult customers).

Low job demands may include:

* having too little to do (e.g. running out of work) or long idle periods where workers cannot perform other tasks (e.g. where a worker must monitor a process and cannot perform other tasks until it is complete)
* highly monotonous or repetitive tasks which require low levels of thought processing and little variety (e.g. packing products or monitoring production lines)
* work that is too easy (e.g. significantly below a worker’s skills or abilities), and
* idle periods when high workloads are present (e.g. having urgent work but being unable to proceed until equipment, resources or support become available).

**Controlling job demands**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Schedule tasks to avoid intense or sustained low or high job demands (e.g. schedule non-urgent work for quieter periods).
* Manage supply chains to avoid large fluctuations in demand (e.g. delays in supplies causing backlogs of orders).
* Plan shifts to allow adequate rest and recovery, particularly between periods of high demand.

Physical work environment

* Design the workplace to eliminate demanding tasks or jobs (e.g. locate the storeroom next to the loading dock so deliveries do not require double handling).
* Provide quiet spaces for workers doing mentally demanding work.
* Implement systems to reduce human error (e.g. use IT systems to capture important information and generate reminders).
* Provide appropriate break areas (e.g. air-conditioned or shady areas for physically demanding work or staff-only areas for workers dealing with difficult customers).

For information on safe physical work environments see the Code of Practice:[*Managing the work environment and facilities*](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-codes-practice/model-code-practice-managing-work-environment-and-facilities)*.* For information on designing structures which will, or could reasonably be, used as a workplace see the Code of Practice: [Safe *design of structures*](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-codes-practice/model-code-practice-safe-design-structures)*.*

Modifying job demands

* Plan your workforce so you have an adequate number of appropriately skilled staff to do the work and so that tasks utilise your workers’ skills.
* Roster enough workers to ensure they can take required breaks over long or busy shifts.
* Rotate workers through demanding or repetitive tasks.
* Reschedule non-urgent tasks if demand is unexpectedly high or low.
* Provide additional support during periods of high demand (e.g. provide more workers, better equipment or outsource tasks).
* Schedule enough time for difficult tasks to be completed safely. Inexperienced workers may require additional time, supervision or support.
* Outsource tasks to external companies with the capacity to deliver services safely (e.g. outsource tasks to companies that have appropriately skilled workers or specialised equipment).

Safe work systems and procedures

* Empower workers in situations where they face high emotional demands (e.g. allow discretion in providing refunds where appropriate to avoid customer aggression or distress).
* Have regular conversations about work expectations, workloads, deadlines and instructions to ensure job demands are understood and can be managed.
* Regularly review and update work policies and procedures to avoid unnecessary work (e.g. ensure reporting lines are suitable for current workloads).
* Have systems for escalating problems and getting support from managers.

The worker

* Set achievable performance targets, with consideration for the worker’s experience and skills.
* Provide training if required to ensure workers have the skills to meet work demands.
* If emotional demands are an unavoidable part of a worker’s role, ensure these are captured in the position description and applicants are informed at the pre‑selection stage (e.g. at interview) of the demanding nature of the role.

# Low job control

Having little control or say over the work or aspects of the work including how or when the job is done.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Low job control may include:

* requiring permission or sign-off before progressing routine or low risk tasks (e.g. before ordering standard monthly supplies or sending routine internal emails)
* workers’ level of autonomy not matching their abilities (e.g. inexperienced and highly skilled workers are given the same level of autonomy)
* prescriptive processes and not allowing workers to apply their skills or judgment (e.g. work is tightly scripted and workers cannot adapt to the specific situation)
* lack of consultation about changes impacting their work (e.g. changing processes for interacting with clients)
* limited scope for workers to adapt the way they work to changing situations or adopt efficiencies in their work (e.g. not allowing workers to adapt processes which do not suit the situation)
* workers have little influence on how they do their work, when they change tasks or take breaks (e.g. work is machine or computer paced)
* workers are unable to avoid dealing with aggression or abuse (e.g. police or healthcare services), and
* workers do not have control over their physical environment (e.g. working in uncomfortable temperatures).

**Controlling low job control**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Match workers’ level of autonomy to their skills and experience.
* Implement consultation arrangements to regularly discuss the work, how it is done and any changes impacting workers.
* Develop governance arrangements and approval processes that balance risks and efficiency to streamline lower risk tasks.
* Design processes and systems to deal with new situations and provide autonomy for workers to apply their judgement when processes are not fit for purpose.

Physical work environment

* Design processes and systems so workers control their workflow (e.g. use electronic systems to filter client queues and give workers control over when the next client is called).
* If work is machine or computer paced, design processes so workers can alter the pace of work, change tasks, or pause the workflow to take breaks.
* Provide workers with reasonable control over their physical environment (e.g. workers can adjust their workstation).

Improving job control

* Plan any regular additional work hours or changes to work in advance with workers (e.g. if additional hours are usually required during peak season, plan this in advance with workers).
* Involve workers in organisational decision-making processes and encourage suggestions for continuously improving work practices.
* Plan deadlines, performance targets, work allocations and work plans in consultation with workers.
* Hold regular team meetings and discuss any work challenges with workers and discuss how problems could be solved.
* Monitor staff in way that is not excessive or punitive.

Safe work systems and procedures

* Create an environment where workers feel empowered to raise safety concerns about work requirements.
* Encourage workers to suggest changes or adopt efficiencies in their work.
* Provide leadership and supervision that supports workers to take reasonable control over their work.

The worker

* Develop a performance management system that ensures workers have input into the way they do their work rather than focusing only on output.
* Hire workers with the right mix of skills and experience for the position including the level of autonomy the job will have.

# Poor support

Inadequate support, including insufficient support from supervisors or other workers.

Not having the resources they need to do the job or support work performance.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Poor support may include:

* insufficient, unclear or contradictory information (e.g. necessary information is not passed on or is communicated poorly)
* not having the things to do their job properly or on time (e.g. not having the necessary tools, systems, equipment or resources)
* frequently needing to compete for the things needed to do the job (e.g. where multiple workers need to use equipment at the same time)
* poorly maintained or inadequate tools, systems and equipment (e.g. tools are broken or IT systems do not work as intended)
* inadequate training for the task (e.g. new workers are asked to do complex tasks or workers are expected to use new tools without training)
* jobs where supervisors are unavailable to make decisions or provide support (e.g. they work from a different location or are frequently in meetings)
* inadequate guidance from supervisors or assistance from other workers (e.g. other workers are not available to help safely complete tasks)
* workers cannot ask for help when needed (e.g. workers are not able to pause work, leave their workstations or are working remotely without means to contact supervisors)
* workplace cultures that discourage supervisors or co-workers supporting each other (e.g. highly competitive, insecure, critical, uncooperative or uncollaborative workplaces)
* working environments that discourage discussion (e.g. lack of suitable spaces to discuss sensitive issues or where workers are physically separated)
* limited emotional support or unempathetic leadership (e.g. supervisors do not notice when workers are struggling, do not take issues seriously or provide a safe space to raise issues), and
* infrequent or poor performance feedback and discussions (e.g. feedback is unclear, unhelpful or not provided).

**Controlling poor support**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Implement good information sharing systems so workers have quick access to the information they need to do their jobs (e.g. ensure databases are kept up to date and are user friendly).
* Design work so supervisors have manageable workloads, sufficient resources and their span of control allows effective supervision (e.g. supervisors have time to answer questions or assist with challenging tasks).
* Establish systems to ensure regular, fair, goal-focused and constructive feedback discussions occur between workers and supervisors to discuss work tasks, and any support or development needs (e.g. implement end of shift debriefs or require supervisors to do quarterly check ins).
* Provide clear management structures and reporting lines (e.g. provide organisational charts or ensure workers understand who to go to for help).

Physical work environment

* Provide workers with the things they need to do their jobs properly and safely (e.g. the right tools, equipment, systems and resources) and ensure workers have sufficient access to them (e.g. they are conveniently located and workers do not need to compete for access).
* Provide workers with access to supervisors (e.g. locate workers close to their supervisor or if working remotely provide tools like videoconferencing).
* Design the work environment to facilitate cooperation and ensure people can ask for help (e.g. workers can easily have discussions with others and there are suitable meeting spaces).

Increasing support

* Hold regular team meetings, and discuss any challenges, issues and support needs (e.g. ask workers about any new challenges or training they may need).
* Build a workplace culture that values collaboration and cooperation instead of competition (e.g. establish team rather than individual goals or praise cooperation).
* Maintain tools, systems and equipment, and review whether they are suitable for the work (e.g. ensure equipment works and consider whether other equipment might work better or more efficiently).
* Schedule meetings to ensure supervisors have availability during workers’ usual hours to meet with them so workers can raise issues or ask questions.
* Increase the level of support during peak periods or challenging tasks (e.g. roster more workers on during peak season or check in more often for challenging tasks).
* Backfill roles or redistribute work when workers are out of the office or on leave.
* Design rosters so supervisors are available to help during difficult or busy times.
* Set clear work goals and clearly explain tasks.

Safe work systems and procedures

* Train workers on how to do their jobs and use relevant tools, equipment, systems, policies, or processes.
* Establish open communication (e.g. have an open-door policy) and encourage workers to share concerns early (e.g. by taking their concerns seriously and ensure they have safe spaces to raise them).
* Encourage and reward workers supporting each other.
* Encourage the development of positive working relationships (e.g. invest in team planning and building activities and encourage team discussions).
* Build interpersonal capabilities across the team (e.g. emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, or communication and feedback skills).
* Encourage supervisors to be empathetic in their leadership, including taking workers’ concerns seriously, sensitively managing problems and helping when workers are struggling.
* Ensure supervisors understand their role in supervising workers.
* Encourage supervisors to provide timely, task specific, constructive feedback.

The worker

* Hire supervisors with the skills, experience and training to perform their role and support their team.
* Provide development programs to improve supervisors’ skills.
* Establish inductions, training and mentoring (e.g. buddy programs) for new workers.

# Lack of role clarity

Unclear, inconsistent or frequently changing roles, responsibilities or expectations.

Lack of important job-related information.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Lack of role clarity may include:

* unclear, inconsistent, or frequently changing jobs or role responsibilities
* overlap in responsibilities between workers (e.g. workers are given the same task and are not clear who is responsible for what)
* conflicting, uncertain, or frequently changing expectations and work standards (e.g. workers are given conflicting deadlines or instructions)
* conflicting, unclear or changing reporting lines
* missing or incomplete task information, or
* a lack of clarity about work priorities (e.g. which tasks or stakeholder relationships are most important).

**Controlling lack of role clarity**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Provide position descriptions that clearly outline all key tasks, responsibilities and role expectations.
* Design management structures with clear reporting lines.
* Provide workers with a single immediate supervisor.
* Detail reporting lines in an organisational chart.

Physical work environment

* Provide a workplace which is compatible with workers’ responsibilities (e.g. seat workers with their teams).
* Provide systems, tools and equipment which is compatible with workers’ responsibilities (e.g. IT systems with profiles set up for different users and access to programs they need for their role).

Providing role clarity

* Provide clear work instructions and expectations, explain why roles, responsibilities and tasks have been allocated, and ensure workers understand.
* Ensure workers assigned to the same task understand who is doing what.
* Change tasks or processes that frequently create conflict, confusion, or result in frequent mistakes (e.g. provide clearer explanations or redesign the tasks).
* Update job descriptions and any role expectations following changes.
* Implement regular check-ins and encourage open discussion among team members to ensure they are clear about who is doing what.
* Provide all workers with an induction and ensure they understand their role.
* Provide clear guidelines for what to do when expectations do not align (e.g. between workers, workers and supervisors, or workers and clients).
* Implement systems to help workers identify issues or conflicts and resolve them.

Safe work systems and procedures

* Talk to workers to ensure they understand their role, your expectations, who they report to and the organisations work more broadly.
* Encourage feedback on changes that affect workers’ job tasks
* Design a performance feedback system where employees receive regular feedback and provide them an opportunity to raise concerns about role clarity.
* Check with employees to ensure they understand any additional or different responsibilities or duties following an organisational change or restructure.

The worker

* Encourage workers to talk to their supervisor or manager early if they are unclear about the scope or responsibilities of their role.
* Provide a realistic job summary and overview during recruitment and selection processes so applicants are aware of the role, expectations and responsibilities.

# Poor organisational change management

Organisational change management that is poorly planned, communicated, supported or managed.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Poor organisational change management may include:

* not consulting workers on changes in the workplace (e.g. not talking to workers or genuinely considering their views)
* poor consideration of work health and safety risks or performance impacts of a change (e.g. not considering health and safety risks when downsizing, relocating or introducing new technology or not allowing for drops in productivity while workers learn new processes)
* poorly planned changes (e.g. changes are disorganised, do not have a clear goal or do not account for workers’ needs; inadequate communication with stakeholders causing disruption)
* poor communication about planned changes (e.g. allowing rumours to spread without providing timely, authoritative information)
* insufficient information is provided regarding changes (e.g. information is unclear or does not provide enough guidance for workers to understand and engage with the change)
* inadequate support for workers through the change process (e.g. not allowing time for workers to learn new tasks), or
* providing insufficient training to support changes (e.g. how to perform a new role or use a new process).

**Controlling poor organisational change management**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* You must consult workers who are, or are likely to be, affected by a work health and safety matter. You must agree consultation arrangements with your workers and should design them to suit your workplace. You must use agreed consultation arrangements when planning changes that raise work health and safety concerns.
* Modify work plans to allow for a period of change (e.g. adjusting performance targets while workers learn new roles).
* Plan any changes to duties, tasks, objectives and reporting arrangements to ensure they are reasonable and fair (e.g. ensure workers will not have too much to do).

Physical work environment

* Provide practical support for changes in duties, tasks or objectives (e.g. ensure workers have access to the tools and resources they need to perform a new task).
* Provide mechanisms to guide workers and managers through the change process (e.g. provide information or feedback sessions to address any concerns).

Managing and communicating organisational change

* Provide authoritative information about upcoming changes and options being considered as soon as possible, keep workers up to date, and ensure workers understand the changes (e.g. provide updates at team meetings or on notice boards).
* Inform customers and suppliers about changes and any impacts this will have.
* Provide workers with the reasons for changes.
* Provide emotional support to help workers deal with challenges or frustrations resulting from change and uncertainty.

Safe work systems and procedures

* Encourage workers to engage with the development of new position descriptions and work processes.
* Encourage workers to engage with consultation and raise any issues, concerns or suggestions.
* Respect individual differences and recognise workers will respond to change in a range of ways and will have different needs in consultation and engagement.

The worker

* You must provide workers any information, training, instruction and supervision necessary to safely complete their work (e.g. train them on safely using new equipment).
* Ensure the person communicating changes has the skills and authority to do so, and supervisors have the skills to support workers through periods of change.

# Inadequate recognition and reward

Jobs where there is an imbalance between workers’ effort and recognition or rewards, both formal and informal.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Inadequate recognition and reward may include:

* receiving unfair negative feedback (e.g. criticism on things workers cannot control or on things for which they have received insufficient training and support)
* receiving insufficient feedback or recognition (e.g. workers do not receive feedback on their work or are not given information to help them improve; workers are not acknowledged or rewarded for high effort or supporting colleagues)
* unfair, biased, opaque, or inequitable distribution of recognition and rewards (e.g. workers being rewarded for the efforts of others)
* limited opportunities for development (e.g. a lack of job training or development), or
* not recognising workers’ skills (e.g. closely supervising or directing an experienced staff member on simple tasks).

**Controlling inadequate recognition and reward**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Use fair, transparent and meaningful ways of providing recognition and rewards to reflect workers’ efforts (e.g. avoid only recognising the workers doing high profile work; recognise teamwork and corporate contributions).
* Design fair and transparent performance management processes (e.g. ensure performance measures relate to aspects of work within a worker’s control and consult workers on performance expectations).

Providing appropriate recognition and reward

* Provide recognition or feedback promptly and ensure it is specific, practical, fair and clearly relates to workers’ performance.
* Consult workers when designing reward and recognition systems.

Safe work systems and procedures

* Develop leaders’ abilities to provide constructive feedback and recognise good performance.
* Ensure performance management systems focus on aspects of work that are within the worker’s control.
* Ensure you attribute work correctly and ensure the right workers receive recognition for achievements.
* Train supervisors on how to have difficult conversations and manage underperformance in a way that prioritises improvement over blame.

The worker

* Implement systems to support performance (e.g. training and mentoring) and provide opportunities for development (e.g. allow workers to take ownership of particular tasks).
* Recruit or train supervisors with the skills to provide constructive feedback and recognise the contributions of workers.

# Poor organisational justice

Poor organisational justice involves a lack of procedural justice (fair processes to reach decisions), informational fairness (keeping people informed), or interpersonal fairness (treating people with dignity and respect).

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Poor organisational justice may include:

* failing to treat workers’ information sensitively or maintain their privacy (e.g. having performance discussions in front of others or using information for a purpose it was not disclosed for)
* policies or procedures that are unfair, biased or applied inconsistently (e.g. promotion based on favouritism, or applying disciplinary policies inconsistently or discriminatorily)
* penalising workers for things outside their control (e.g. for not producing a sufficient number of products when they did not have access to the required materials)
* failing to recognise or accommodate the reasonable needs of workers (e.g. failing to provide an accessible workplace)
* discriminating against particular groups or not applying policies fairly to some groups
* failing to appropriately address (actual or alleged) underperformance, inappropriate or harmful behaviour, or misconduct (e.g. not investigating allegations of sexual harassment or not providing procedural justice for workers accused of bullying)
* allocating work, shifts and opportunities in a discriminatory or unfair way (e.g. giving ‘good’ shifts based on friendships with supervisor), or
* no or inadequate processes for making decisions affecting workers (e.g. policies and processes do not set out the key considerations for disciplinary decisions).

**Controlling poor organisational justice**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Design unbiased and transparent workplace processes, policies and procedures in consultation with workers (e.g. decision making, recruitment, promotion, performance management, task allocation, work health and safety or workplace entitlement policies).
* Consult workers when setting work standards or performance expectations. Ensure they are achievable and workers will not be penalised for things outside their control.

Physical work environment

* Design a workplace environment where private conversations can be held and ensure confidential information is kept secure.
* Ensure the workplace accommodates reasonable needs of workers (e.g. provide accessible ramps, doors or IT equipment).

Safe work systems and procedures

* Provide mechanisms for workers to report issues, raise concerns or appeal workplace decisions.
* Regularly review policies, processes, procedures, performance expectations and decisions to ensure they are appropriate, fair and reflect the needs of the workplace.
* Communicate processes and information to workers in a timely and appropriate way (e.g. notify unsuccessful applicants privately before you publicly announce promotion decisions).
* Provide systems to protect workers who raise safety concerns from discrimination (Sections 104-109 of the WHS Act prohibit discriminatory, coercive or misleading conduct).

The worker

* Encourage workers to use available processes to raise concerns, issues or complaints early, and use appeal processes when necessary.
* Ensure workers understand expectations and performance targets.
* Hire and promote workers based on merit using transparent selection methods.

# Traumatic events or material

Witnessing, investigating or being exposed to traumatic events or material. A person is more likely to experience an event as traumatic when it is unexpected, is perceived as uncontrollable or is the result of intentional cruelty. This includes vicarious exposure and cumulative trauma.

Traumatic events involving work-related violence are covered in Appendix B.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Traumatic events or material may include:

* witnessing or investigating a fatality, serious injury, abuse, neglect or serious incident (e.g. working in child protection)
* exposure to seriously injured or deceased persons (e.g. working in an emergency department or as a forensic scientist)
* experiencing fear or extreme risks (e.g. being in a motor vehicle accident, workplace incident or near miss)
* exposure to natural disasters (e.g. emergency services workers responding to floods or bushfires)
* witnessing or investigating terrorism or war (e.g. police officers responding to terrorist attacks or journalists reporting on wars)
* supporting victims of painful and traumatic events (e.g. providing counselling services)
* listening to or reading descriptions of painful and traumatic events experienced by others (e.g. lawyers reviewing evidence or advocates helping with victim testimonies)
* finding evidence of crimes or traumatic events (e.g. customs workers or online moderators), and
* exposure to events that bring up traumatic memories.

**Controlling exposure to traumatic events or material**

*Note: These are examples only. You must identify and implement control measures that eliminate or minimise the risks in your workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Job/work design

* Design work to minimise the number of workers exposed to traumatic events (e.g. design roles so tasks that can be carried out away from an accident or disaster scene are performed from another location).
* Coordinate and schedule tasks at traumatic scenes so workers are not exposed to unnecessary trauma (e.g. arrange for less urgent tasks to be performed after a body has been removed).

Physical work environment

* Eliminate physical risks to health and safety in the workplace to prevent trauma from a workplace incident or near miss.
* Remove or secure potentially lethal means of self-harm (e.g. medications or hazardous chemicals) from the workplace or secure them (e.g. require two workers to enter codes to access storage units or require higher level authorisation processes).
* Provide physical barriers to discourage suicide attempts (e.g. install fences to prevent access to train tracks or railings on bridges, locking windows and limiting roof access).
* Implement file flagging processes or password requirements on potentially distressing files to eliminate inadvertent exposure to distressing content.

Minimising exposure to traumatic events or material

* Reduce exposure to traumatic materials, particularly if there is no operational need for workers to view or listen to all the materials or consider them in detail (e.g. allow online moderators to remove users based on a single serious breach or encourage officers discovering suspected child abuse material to pass that material to identified investigations without reviewing it).
* Use screening software to remove explicit material.
* Minimise the number of workers exposed to traumatic materials or events (e.g. do not bring unnecessary workers into an investigation or natural disaster area).
* Minimise the amount of traumatic materials or events each worker is exposed to (e.g. rotate police officers through different roles to provide periods of respite).
* Reduce workloads so workers can investigate thoroughly and provide adequate support to victims (e.g. prevent workers from feeling they ‘failed someone’).
* Increase breaks and recovery time after exposure to a traumatic event (e.g. provide time to disconnect from work).

Safe work systems and procedures

* Provide guidelines and procedures for dealing with incidents, train workers in these procedures and ensure they understand them (e.g. reduce the number of decisions workers make during a traumatic event).
* Implement reporting systems for exposure to traumatic or distressing events. Implement systems that prompt supervisors to support workers, trigger a review of the incident and a review of whether control measures are working as planned.
* Create a safe space for workers to report traumatic or distressing events and deal with these disclosures sensitively and seriously.
* Implement peer support programs.
* Implement procedures for providing support after traumatic events (e.g. provide counselling and professional support).
* Train supervisors on responding to trauma and where they can get assistance.

The worker

* Ensure recruitment and selection practices incorporate a realistic job preview so applicants are aware the role has the potential to expose them to trauma.
* Monitor the health of your workers following traumatic events, or when dealing with traumatic materials, using processes developed in consultation with workers.
* Provide training to workers so they understand their role, know how to respond effectively, and know where to access advice and assistance during a traumatic event.
* Provide training to workers who may be exposed to traumatic events or have a role in supporting workers who are exposed, so they can recognise signs and symptoms of stress and ensure they know where and how to access support.
* Monitor and support workers following traumatic events (e.g. are there any changes to their behaviours or increased absenteeism).
* Provide employee assistance programs and encourage workers to use them.

# Remote or isolated work

Work that is isolated from the assistance of other persons because of the location, time or nature of the work.

Working in environments where there are long travel times, poor access to resources, or communications are limited and difficult.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Remote or isolated work may include:

* working in locations requiring long commutes to work sites
* significant delays to entering or exiting the worksite (e.g. prisons, tower cranes or confined spaces)
* limited access to resources (e.g. supplies are delivered infrequently or there are significant delays in getting additional equipment if needed)
* limited access to recreation or opportunities to escape work issues (e.g. living in workers’ accommodation in remote areas)
* reduced access to support networks and lower capacity to meet family commitments (e.g. fly-in fly-out or offshore work)
* working alone (e.g. lone workers on night shift)
* working away from the usual workplace (e.g. working in clients’ homes, offsite or from home)
* where there is limited access to reliable communication and technology (e.g. no phone reception or IT systems are frequently offline), and
* difficulties or long delays accessing help in an emergency (e.g. community nurses in remote areas, working in underground mines).

**Controlling remote or isolated work**

WHS Regulation 48

Remote or isolated work

You must manage the risks associated with remote or isolated work, including providing effective communication with the worker carrying out remote or isolated work.

The Code of Practice: [*Managing the workplace environment and facilities*](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-codes-practice/model-code-practice-managing-work-environment-and-facilities) provides information on how the risks associated with remote or isolated work can be controlled including information on:

* workplace layout and design
* communication systems
* buddy systems
* movement records, and
* training information and instruction.

# Poor physical environment

Exposure to unpleasant, poor quality or hazardous working environments or conditions.

*Note: Some of these examples of hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards. Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe. Consider all hazards present and the circumstances to determine what is reasonably practicable to manage the risks.*

Poor physical environments may include:

* performing hazardous tasks
* working in hazardous conditions (e.g. near unsafe machinery or hazardous chemicals)
* performing demanding work while wearing uncomfortable PPE or other equipment (e.g. equipment that is poorly fitted, heavy, or reduces visibility or mobility)
* workplace conditions that affect concentration or ability to complete tasks (e.g. high noise levels, uncomfortable temperatures or poor lighting)
* unpleasant workplace conditions such as poorly maintained amenities, unpleasant smells or loud music
* working with poorly maintained equipment (e.g. equipment that has become unsafe, noisy or started vibrating), and
* work-related accommodation, facilities and amenities that cause or contribute to worker fatigue (e.g. conditions are noisy, uncomfortable or stop workers getting enough sleep).
* You can find more information on physical hazards and the working environment on the Safe Work Australia website.

**Controlling a poor physical environment**

* Like psychosocial hazards, you must eliminate or minimise physical hazards in the workplace as far as is reasonably practicable. Specific duties may also apply under WHS laws, for information on how to manage a poor physical environment please see the Safe Work Australia website.