

مركز أبوظبي للصحة والسلامة المهنية  
ABU DHABI OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH CENTER

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# Abu Dhabi Occupational Safety and Health System Framework

**(OSHAD-SF)**

**Code of Practice**

**CoP 9.2 – Managing Work-Related Stress**

**Version 3.1**

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ABU DHABI PUBLIC  
HEALTH CENTRE

مركز أبوظبي  
للصحة العامة



## Important Note:

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## 1. Introduction

- (a) This Code of Practice (CoP) mandates the requirements of OSHAD and Sector Regulatory Authorities within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and applies to all private and Governmental Employers operating under these Sector Regulatory Authorities within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
- (b) This CoP mandates the requirements for work-related stress management to ensure that psychosocial hazards for employees caused by work-related stress are minimized to a level As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP).
- (c) Well-designed, organized and managed work helps to maintain and promote individual health and well-being. But where there has been insufficient attention to job design, work organization and management the benefits and assets associated with 'good work' could be lost. One common result is work-related stress.
- (d) Work-related stress is a major cause of occupational ill health, poor productivity and human error. It can result in sickness absence, high staff turnover and poor performance and a possible increase in incidents due to human error.
- (e) For the purpose of this CoP work-related stress is defined as the physiological and emotional responses that occur when employees perceive an imbalance between their work demands and their capability and/or resources to meet these demands. Importantly, stress responses occur when the imbalance is such that the employee perceives they are not coping in situations where it is important to them that they cope.
- (f) Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can create a 'buzz' and be a motivating factor, and stress, which can occur when this pressure becomes excessive.
- (g) Work-related stress is not a disease, it is a state. However, if psychosocial hazards in the work environment are unmanaged and stress becomes too excessive and/or prolonged, mental illness (e.g. posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder, and adjustment disorder with anxiety) and physical illness (heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances) may develop.
- (h) Stress can also lead to other behaviors that can have an adverse effect on the health and well-being, e.g. social withdrawal, aggressive behavior, alcohol/drug abuse, eating disorders, and working long hours.

## 2. Training and Competency

- (a) Employers shall ensure that OSH training complies with the requirements of:
- (i) *OSHAD-SF – Element 5 – Training, Awareness and Competency;*
  - (ii) *OSHAD-SF – Mechanism 7.0 – OSH Professional Entity Registration; and*
  - (iii) *OSHAD-SF – Mechanism 8.0 – OSH Practitioner Registration.*
- (b) All line managers, supervisors, occupational health and safety officers, human resources managers, and safety representatives of companies that employ 50 or more people, or as deemed necessary by risk assessment, shall be trained in good management practices for work-related stress.
- (c) Training shall be offered on a yearly basis and shall include the following:
- (i) definition and causes of stress;
  - (ii) key reasons to manage the causes of work-related stress;
  - (iii) management standards approach for work-related stress; including the six key areas of work design associated with work-related stress: demands, control, support, relationships, role, and change;
  - (iv) carrying out a risk assessment for work-related stress;
  - (v) developing solutions to address work-related stress for each of the six key areas of work design;
  - (vi) dealing with individual concerns;
  - (vii) employers work-related stress policy; and
  - (viii) appropriate requirements of the *OSHAD-SF – CoP 9.0 – Workplace Wellness* and *OSHAD-SF – CoP 9.1 – Expectant Mothers.*
- (d) Employers shall maintain a record of the required training that contains the following:
- (i) name and ID number;
  - (ii) Emirates ID number of the employee;
  - (iii) subject(s) of training;
  - (iv) date(s) of training; and
  - (v) person providing the training

## 3. Requirements

### 3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

#### 3.1.1 Employers

- (a) Employers shall undertake their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the general requirements of *OSHAD-SF – Element 1 – Roles, Responsibilities and Self-Regulation Section 3.2.5*.
- (b) Employers that employ 50 or more people, or as deemed necessary by risk assessment, shall develop a work related stress management program and implement appropriate prevention and control measures.
- (c) Employers that employ 50 or more people, or as deemed by risk assessment, shall:
  - (i) develop a program that documents employer commitment to manage work-related stress, establishes a risk assessment approach to stress management, and defines roles and responsibilities of managers, OSH staff, human resources staff, and employees;
  - (ii) identify workplace stressors and conduct periodical risk assessments to eliminate stress or manage the risks from stress using a risk assessment approach;
  - (iii) implement control measures to manage risks that can increase stress among employees;
  - (iv) provide training for OSH professionals, managers and supervisory staff in good work-related stress management practices;
  - (v) provide appropriate resources to enable managers to implement the company's agreed stress management strategy; and
  - (vi) define roles and responsibilities of managers, occupational health and safety staff, human resources staff, employees, safety representatives and safety committees (as applicable).

#### 3.1.2 Employees

- (a) Employees shall undertake their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the general requirements of *OSHAD-SF – Element 1 – Roles, Responsibilities and Self-Regulation Section 3.2.7*.
- (b) Employees shall ensure that they have notified their direct manager or other suitable person of any workplace stressor or unsuitable behaviour within the workplace.
- (c) Employees shall participate in any work related stress management programs provided by the employer.
- (d) Employees shall ensure that they have notified their direct manager or other suitable person of any adverse health effects or symptoms that may occur due to work related stress.

### 3.2 Work-Related Stress Management Program

- (a) Work-related stress management programs will be based on the results of appropriate risk assessment, as per *OSHAD-SF – Element 2 – Risk Management*.
- (b) Six key areas of work design shall be addressed in a work-related stress management program:
  - (i) Demands – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment;
  - (ii) Control – how much an employee has in the way they do their work;
  - (iii) Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the employer, line management and colleagues;
  - (iv) Relationships – this includes promoting positive working atmosphere to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior at all levels of the entity;
  - (v) Role – whether employee understands their role within the entity and whether the employer ensures they do not have conflicting roles; and
  - (vi) Change – how change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the employer.
- (c) Specific requirements that shall be addressed include:
  - (i) *Demands:*
    1. employers provides employees with appropriate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
    2. employees skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
    3. jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
    4. employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.
  - (ii) *Control:*
    1. where reasonable practicable, employees have control over their pace of work;
    2. employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
    3. where reasonably practicable, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
    4. employees have a say over when breaks are taken; and
    5. employees are consulted over their work patterns.

(iii) *Support:*

1. employers has policies and procedures to appropriately support employees;
2. systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;
3. systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
4. employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
5. employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
6. employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

(iv) *Relationships:*

1. employers promotes positive behaviors at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
2. employees share information relevant to their work;
3. employers has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behavior;
4. systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behavior; and
5. systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behavior.

(v) *Role:*

1. employers ensures that, as far as reasonably practicable, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
2. employers provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
3. employers ensures that, as far as reasonably practicable, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
4. systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

(vi) *Change:*

1. employers provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;
2. employers ensures appropriate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
3. employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
4. employees are aware of timetables for changes; and
5. employees have access to relevant support during changes.



### 3.3 Dealing with Individual Concerns

- (a) The main focus of the work-related stress management program is to address issues that are potential sources of stress for groups of employees.
- (b) Employers shall develop ways for employees to raise their concerns. These shall include the following:
  - (i) to create an environment where employees are encouraged to talk, both formally and informally, to their manager or another person in their management chain;
  - (ii) to remind employees that they can speak to health and safety representatives, or human resources personnel;
  - (iii) to encourage employees to talk to someone in the employer or seek advice from occupational health advisors, or a HAAD-licensed physician or psychologist if they are concerned about their health;
  - (iv) to introduce mentoring and other forms of co-employee support; and
  - (v) to provide employee assistance (counseling) services.
- (c) Reaction to employee concerns: employers shall generate action towards limiting the harm to the individual, when it is directly drawn to their attention:
  - (i) it shall be clear who has the responsibility to progress the report or complaint of work-related stress; and
  - (ii) line managers are encouraged to take any of the following actions as they see appropriate:
    1. speaking to the person involved, to find out what has led to the complaint, and what can be done about it;
    2. asking for expert assistance where the stress is serious, fault is cited, and things have gone clearly beyond with what the manager can deal with;
    3. when the complaint involves relationship issues with the line manager, or other team members, it is very useful to involve human resources, occupational health, and a representative for the employee when working through the problem; and
    4. where it is reasonably practicable to identify a clearly work-related problem, it is essential to rectify the situation as swiftly as reasonably practicable, even if this involves compromises on either side. It is much easier to intervene successfully when the employee remains at work, than after they have gone off sick.
- (d) Employers are not legally responsible for stress that originates in the home. However, employers shall have arrangements that allow them to address this. This may include, but not be limited to:
  - (i) access to counseling services;
  - (ii) adaptations to the work; or
  - (iii) changes to working hours.

## 4. References

- OSHAD-SF – Element 2 – Risk Management
- OSHAD-SF – CoP 9.0 – Workplace Wellness
- OSHAD-SF – CoP 9.1 – Expectant Mothers
- *United Arab Emirates Labour Law and the Ministerial Orders implementing its provisions. Federal Law No. (8) of 1980, as amended by Federal Law No. (8) of 2007*
- *Managing the causes of work-related stress. A step-by-step approach using the Management Standards. HSG218, 2nd edition, 2007, ISBN 978 7176 6273 9. Available at <http://www.EHS.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg218.pdf>, accessed at August 19, 2011*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. Queensland Government, <http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/subjects/stress/about/index.htm>, accessed at August 19, 2011*
- *Psychological health for small businesses. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. Available at: <http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/resources/pdfs/psychhealth-smallbusiness.pdf>, accessed at August 19, 2011*
- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress>
- *Mackay CJ, Cousins R, Kelly PJ, Lee S and McCaig RH (2004) “Management Standards” and work-related stress in the UK: Policy background and science’ Work & Stress 18 (2), 91-112*
- *Cousins R, Mackay CJ, Clarke SD, Kelly C, Kelly PJ, and McCaig RH (2004) “Management Standards” and work-related stress in the UK: Practical development’ Work & Stress 18 (2), 113-136*

## 5. Document Amendment Record

Version	Revision Date	Description of Amendment	Page/s Affected
2.0	Feb 2012	First Issue	N/A
3.0	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2016	Change of Logo	All
		Change from AD EHS Center to OSHAD	throughout
		Change of document title: AD EHSMS RF to OSHAD-SF	Throughout
		Acknowledgements deleted	2/3
		Preface Deleted	4
		EHS changes to OSH	Throughout
		Clause 2(d) added	4
3.1	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	Clause 3.1.2 added	5



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