

## **Do not let stress harm your health! Napo Guide to Stress at Work**

### **How to identify stress**

Signs of stress include:

- Irritability
- Suppressed anger
- Loss of concentration
- Inability to complete one task before starting another
- Feelings of paranoia/inadequacy
- Tearfulness at minor problems
- Feeling withdrawn

These short-term symptoms can develop into much more serious long-term ill-health conditions such as

- Heart and circulation problems, for example high blood pressure, heart attack and strokes;
- The digestive system could also be impacted;
- There may be lowered resistance to infections; and
- A heightened risk of suffering from mental health problems.

Coping mechanisms that some people use to deal with stress including smoking, drinking too much and comfort eating, can themselves lead to ill-health.

### **The employer's duty**

The potential impact of stress on your performance at work and long term impact on health are reasons why it is important to ask your employer to carry out a stress risk assessment.

Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work - just as they would any other workplace health and safety hazard such as slips and falls. Safety legislation states that such risks must be managed through risk assessment. The employers must remove or reduce the workplace hazards that they are aware of.

It is a legal requirement that the assessment must be 'suitable and sufficient', therefore sufficient control measures must be in place to eliminate the factors that can cause stress. If you or your representative think the assessment does not meet this standard it should be reviewed.

## What to do if you feel stressed

### Do not suffer on your own

- Speak to your manager/ colleagues/Napo rep/ Health and Safety Manager or advisor and your GP
- Request a referral to Occupational Health and contact your employee support service
- Attend Napo branch meetings and open meetings to discuss the situation in your workplace.
- Raise workloads at team meetings
- Raise concerns about workloads at supervision meetings and record this and any agreed outcomes

### Record the problem

- Keep a written record of any stress related issues and send them to management so that they can't say they were not aware of them.
- If your workloads are high complete a Napo foreseeability notice <https://www.napo.org.uk/workloads>
- Ask your branch to conduct a stress survey
- record that you are suffering from stress in the accident/incident reporting system, for example, if a particular incident has caused you to become stressed or if your workloads are very high and this is causing stress
- Request a stress risk assessment and if stress is affecting your colleagues, ask for a team stress risk assessment.
- Ask your Napo rep to be involved in the risk assessment process – the rep is entitled to advise and support members through the stress risk assessment.

**Managers**, - you may be suffering from stress (in which case follow the steps above), but if stress is indicated on the fit note for a member of your team consider a formal stress risk assessment before return to work takes place - make sure you have had the training to lead stress risk assessments. The return to work interviews should be used to consider the issue of stress.

**For more information on how to deal with stress at work contact  
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