

6 Steps to Prevent Workplace Stress



Mental stress has become a major challenge for HR directors:

- According to Statistics Canada, 30.8% of Canadian employees say that most of the working day is considerably or extremely stressful;
- Short and long periods of incapacity absence due to mental health problems represent 1/3 of requests for workers' comp and 70% of the total cost;
- In addition to health problems, stress in the workplace reduces employee job satisfaction and productivity;
- Employees experiencing stress are more likely to suffer injuries at work.

Preventing Workplace Stress

What's less well understood is what you can actually do to combat the problem. But that's starting to change. As employers try new things, we're learning more about what does and doesn't work in preventing workplace stress. One of the best places to look for best practices and lessons that you can use at your own workplace is the **recent report from the International Labour Organization (ILO)** which sets out a Checklist of 50 "checkpoints" for stress prevention.

To adapt the Checklist for your own circumstances, you must perform an assessment of your workplace. The ILO Report suggests a 6-step approach.

Step 1. Collect the Right Data

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

Step 2. Define the Work Area to Be Assessed

If possible, assess all areas of the workplace for stress-related risk factors. If that's not viable, e.g., because the workplace is too large, limit the assessment to specific work areas that you should identify in consultation with management, union or other employee representatives, members of the workplace

Joint Health and Safety Committee and other personnel who can provide key insight. I

Step 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.

Step 4. Record 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 isn’t needed, mark NO;
- If you think the measure is worthwhile, mark YES;
- Use the space under “Remarks” to write your suggestion or note its location.

Step 5. Select Priorities

Among the items marked YES, choose the ones that are likely to offer the most important benefits. Mark these as PRIORITY.

Step 6. Group Discussion about 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 based on the checklist. Communicate with management and workers about the proposed measures and follow up on the implementation of these measures.