

## Scenario 8

# Manufacturing business

### Example scenarios for managing psychosocial hazards and risks at work



The control measures you choose must suit the organisational and worker needs and effectively control the risks to the highest level that is reasonably practicable. Below is an industry-specific scenario example featuring common psychosocial hazards and risks, example controls and approaches to maintain, monitor, review and achieve continual improvement of the risk management approach.

## Scenario context and work content

A medium sized manufacturing business produces frozen food for sale in supermarkets across Australia. The plant is based in regional NSW and is one of the major employers for the town.

To meet the increasing production demands most workers are required to undertake shift work and there have been recent changes to the production software. The main tasks involve monitoring largely automated plant to ensure the cooking and packing processes are running smoothly. Workers always do the same tasks and their break times are regimented.

A new production system with new quality software is making workers anxious as they have not yet all had training and are worried about making mistakes. A significant number of the workers are migrant workers and do not speak or read English fluently.

There are rumours there are to be changes in the upcoming rosters.

## Psychosocial hazards and risks

**Role underload** - frequent repetitive and monotonous work but with the need to stay vigilant especially around dangerous areas of the plant.

**Low job control** and **lack of task variety** as specific tasks and processes need to be followed to ensure quality standards.

**Low job control** -inability to take breaks when required.

Lack of **role clarity** and poor **change management consultation** around new software and rosters.

## Psychosocial controls

The organisation, after consulting supervisors, work groups and HSRs to discuss the **role under load, low job control, lack of task variety** and **role clarity** is:

- arranging for workers to rotate every few hours to a new task in the plant allowing more opportunities to learn new skills, reduce boredom and fatigue (so to improve their ability to detect errors), and allow more flexibility to take toilet breaks
- ensuring all workers have had training on the new software
- introducing a software champion on each shift who speaks the same language as the majority of that shift.

**Change management consultation:** The supervisor is ensuring all affected workers have reasonable and equal opportunities for input on the options for changes to rosters. These consultations also brought up suggestions from workers on how to improve some of the packing processes to make them more efficient and save money.

## Review and improve

The organisation:

- to identify and assess risks and adequacy of controls gets workers to complete the [People at Work psychosocial risk assessment survey](#) and monitors and reviews other organisational data
- ensures the leadership team have all completed training on their WHS duties and good work design and are applying these to future restructures and planned software upgrades

The supervisor:

- supports workers who want to develop skills where possible to move to different areas of the plant, and
- became a member of an industry Mental Health Community of Practice to get ideas and support on managing psychosocial hazards and risks from other peers in the industry.

Refer to SafeWork NSW's [Code of Practice Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work](#) for more information or [Designing Work to Manage Psychosocial Risks](#) which also includes four case studies illustrating organisational and team level work design, and team and task level work design.