

INFORMATION SHEET**SAFework NSW**

TRAUMATIC EVENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Traumatic Event Management Plan (TEMP) is a practical document to assist workplaces respond to and manage traumatic events, such as incidents and assaults, some of which can involve threats to life, or witnessing or experiencing serious injuries. The TEMP is an example of the planning and preparation a workplace can do. Some workplaces may have their own process for planning and recording.



Having processes in place to prepare for and manage traumatic events means workers can be supported from the earliest possible opportunity, help to prevent further psychological harm and help to identify and manage psychosocial hazards at work that could increase the risk of harm. Refer to the NSW Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work for a list of the most common psychosocial hazards www.safework.nsw.gov.au/code-psychosocial-hazards

The TEMP provides information to workplaces on how to manage psychological health risks from traumatic events to ensure the health and safety of workers or other persons at work.

'Health' is defined in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, as both physical and psychological health. A worker's health can be adversely affected by exposure to a traumatic event, particularly where exposure is severe or prolonged. This can increase the likelihood of workers experiencing a stress response which can

increase the risk of psychological injury such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression, or high levels of unplanned absenteeism from work, including sick leave, high staff turnover, social withdrawal, presenteeism and more task related errors.

WHAT IS PTSD?

- PTSD is a mental health condition that may occur after a traumatic event, or after multiple traumatic events.
- PTSD can happen after there's been actual or threatened serious injury, death or sexual violence to ourselves or others.
- PTSD can also occur after repeated and extreme exposure to the details of traumatic events. For example, emergency workers may be exposed to repeated trauma at work.

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/post-traumatic-stress-order

If you notice someone at work doesn't seem to be coping, or has been affected by a traumatic event, you can help by providing advice and encouragement to the affected worker to talk with their supervisor about available workplace support services, or seek assistance from a counsellor, psychologist or their preferred General Practitioner (GP).

PROVIDE PRACTICAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE EARLY

People have very different reactions to events they have been exposed to and often a reaction may be delayed.

The level of assistance and how it’s provided will need to be assessed on a case by case basis. Support can be arranged through the workplace, and participation should be voluntary and when medically appropriate.

It is important to maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of all the affected parties. The person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) should keep a record of when support is offered and respect their privacy and health information requirements.

Trauma related workers’ compensation claims and absenteeism can be expensive and difficult to manage, so it makes good business sense to ensure best practice approaches to managing and mitigating the impacts of trauma.

YOU CAN ALSO USE THIS PLAN FOR NON-WORK-RELATED TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Some traumatic events may not be work related but may impact on the health of workers, such as natural disasters or grief and loss. If a worker’s health is affected by non-work-related events e.g. losing their house to bushfire or flood or witnessing a severe car accident, you may wish to consider providing additional support and information to your workers to recover and stay connected with work. Actions like this are features of a mentally healthy workplace and taking these steps can lead to benefits such as a supportive culture, more engaged and productive workers and can help attract and retain workers. Refer to the Mental Health at Work website for more information on tips to go beyond compliance to creating a mentally healthy workplace: www.mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au

Use the table below to track progress through the different steps of the TEMP.

Name of organisation:		
STEP 1: BEFORE AN EVENT (prevention/planning)	Date DD/MM/YY	Signed off by
1 Identify and manage the common psychosocial hazards in the work undertaken by your business. This includes addressing the hazard to prevent further harm as far as is reasonably practicable. You may need to consider these psychosocial hazards when workers are recovering at work after a traumatic event. For more information on your duties refer to the Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work www.safework.nsw.gov.au/code-psychosocial-hazards		
2 Ensure supervisors are supported and have the skills to have conversations around mental health. Ensure leaders know what support services are available to workers and when and how to refer for support. Support leaders with procedures to empower them to make these decisions. For example, see resources and support available at www.mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au		
3 Ensure workers and supervisors are aware of and have adequate knowledge of known psychosocial hazards in your industry and the work you do. Ensure workers have been consulted about these psychosocial hazards, there are adequate procedures to manage the risk of these hazards and workers are trained in how to apply the procedures.		
4 To reduce barriers and encourage workers to seek help, raise awareness and reduce any stigma around mental health. Promote a positive culture and develop procedures and implement processes to support those seeking help, raising issues or reporting incidents.		
5 Ensure all worker’s contact details are recorded, kept up to date and reviewed regularly, including emergency contact/next of kin information.		

STEP 1: BEFORE AN EVENT (prevention/planning)		Date DD/MM/YY	Signed off by
6	Have processes in place to respond to emergencies and disasters and ensure workers and managers are trained in these processes. This includes communication and emergency management plans, such as procedures to notify emergency services and emergency contact/next of kin. It also includes who needs to be contacted first from outside the business and then inside the business, how should initial contact with the emergency contact/next of kin occur and from whom. If an emergency response team is established at the workplace, ensure the team have knowledge and understanding that a traumatic event may have an impact on their mental health and be aware of the support processes provided by their workplace.		
7	A business needs to ensure an emergency plan is prepared, maintained and communicated to the workforce. Refer to the Code of Practice: Managing the work environment and facilities www.safework.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/50074/Managing-the-work-environment-and-facilities.pdf		
8	Processes should be established to respond if an incident or fatality occurs at the workplace. This includes whether mental health services can be deployed to the workplace and should include the service provider's name, contact person and phone number. Consider initiating contact with mental health support services competent to assist with trauma or grief such as an Employee Assistance Provider (EAP), a local psychologist or a local Medical Centre and be prepared by arranging a plan for support following trauma.		
STEP 2: DURING		Date DD/MM/YY	Signed off by
1	Implement emergency plan from Step 1 Point 7		
2	Contact emergency services on '000' if required (if there is imminent danger)		
3	Initiate any emergency or serious incident processes you have in place as soon as possible.		
4	This includes notifying the emergency contact/next of kin if appropriate or confirming if emergency services are notifying or have notified the emergency contact/next of kin.		
5	Contact affected workers and offer support and practical assistance. You may be able to begin to arrange medical assistance to be deployed to the workplace and/or an early referral to appropriate mental health services with the consent of the worker.		
6	Coordinate any agreed assistance with workers' families as required.		
STEP 3: AFTER		Date DD/MM/YY	Signed off by
1	The manager or supervisor should arrange a review of the cause of any workplace incidents as soon as appropriate. A suitably skilled person should undertake an assessment of the incident, how it happened, what must be in place to prevent it from happening again, and what interim measures are required in the meantime to manage any risks or harm.		
2	Any discussions with affected workers must be on a voluntary, consensual basis and when medically appropriate to do so.		
3	Review relevant safety and support systems and the effectiveness of procedures and control measures in consultation with workers. Implement any actions that need to be taken if identified in Step 3, points 1 and 3.		
4	Consider engaging professional assistance. The effects of traumatic events can take time to recognise and recover from. Coping strategies, training and support will assist. Some acute reactions can last for several weeks and may require ongoing monitoring and medical review.		

STEP 4: ONGOING SUPPORT		Date DD/MM/YY	Signed off by
1	Assist in recovery at work by providing information and advice to managers and workers about ongoing support and managing risks to the workers' health following the traumatic event.		
2	Remember the effects of a serious incident do not stop after the initial discussions or meetings, and support may need to be ongoing, sometimes up to years. Each person will react differently to being involved in, or witnessing a traumatic event. Some may develop a range of symptoms, which can significantly impact on functioning and meet criteria for a clinical condition. In consultation with the worker, plan how and when to connect over time to review support needs and adjustments to work if necessary (this may be part of a formal injury management plan if the incident was work-related). For more information on supporting recovery at work refer to the Recover at Work page on the Mental Health at Work website www.mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au/mentally-healthy-workplaces/recover-at-work		

SYMPTOMS OF PTSD MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Fear of returning to work
- Lack of sleep or disturbed sleep patterns and/or frightening dreams
- Re-experiencing the traumatic event through intrusive thoughts and memories or flashbacks
- Increased heart rate
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Gastro-intestinal disorders
- Exaggerated startle response
- Low mood, difficulty with concentrating or memory
- Anxiety, depression, phobias
- Grief, anger, guilt, or disbelief.

These symptoms are a normal reaction to a traumatic event and each person should seek advice from their GP, psychologist or psychiatrist for a diagnosis and treatment.

RESOURCES

1. SafeWork NSW Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work

www.safework.nsw.gov.au/code-psychosocial-hazards

2. SafeWork NSW: Mentally healthy workplaces

Mental (psychological) health, just like physical health is an important part of work health and safety. Recognising and managing these risks is an essential part of creating a safe, healthy and productive workplace.

www.safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/mental-health-at-work-the-basics/mental-health-@-work/mentally-healthy-workplaces

3. SafeWork NSW: Young Workers e-Toolkit

In NSW, there are more than half a million young people (aged up to 25) in the workforce. Young workers require additional support to ensure they are carrying out their tasks correctly and safely. The e-Toolkit has a range of resources specifically developed to support young workers' safety.

www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/young-workers-toolkit

4. Mental Health at Work Manager tools and resources

For more information on supporting yourself and others and connecting to support, go to 'Tools & Resources/Support Yourself and Others' on the following page:

www.mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au/what-you-can-do/i-am-a-manager/manager-tools-and-resources

Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety legislation in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation. Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

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