

Scenario 6

Retail store

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 small busy retail store which is open all week has an ageing building and poorly designed fit-out. There are three permanent and several casual workers who are mainly young workers.

Customers often complain and have become aggressive about service delays during peak periods. The manager is sometimes short-tempered, yelling at the workers, especially when it is busy, the stock is being unloaded, and customers are waiting. The storeroom is cluttered and disorganised, which makes the quick collection of prepaid orders difficult.

Casual workers often cancel their shift at the last moment, making managing peak periods quite stressful.

Psychosocial hazards and risks

Role overload: insufficient skilled workers rostered on during peak periods

Hazardous working environment: the layout makes it difficult to access, load and unload stock

Lack of role clarity; new casual workers are often unclear about how to do the work efficiently and do not have the skills to help out, like operate the cash register during busy times

Bullying and occupational violence: from customers and the manager, causing workers to be distressed as they do not know how to respond.

Psychosocial controls

The business owner after consulting workers on **role overload, poor working environment and lack of role clarity**, now:

- ensures more workers are adequately trained so they can assist customers and deal with problems
- ensures adequate number of experienced workers are rostered during peak periods
- arranges, where possible, for supplies to be delivered outside peak periods or for extra workers to be rostered during these times
- reorganised the loading dock, storeroom and shop floor to improve safety and efficiency (including dedicated organised space for prepaid orders) and ensured this is maintained by regular safety walks each day
- releases the rosters well ahead of time so workers can plan better, and pairs young workers with more experienced workers
- ensures new workers have a thorough induction, given busy time tips and trained to use the cash register to manage bullying and violence risks
- provided training to all workers, and
- put up signs displaying designated queuing areas, and that worker abuse will result in refusal of service, etc
- updated the policy and procedures to address identified gaps such as having a specific “service call” that could be made over the loud speaker system so all available team members come to that location to help. Also ensure workers are offered a short time out after incidents to recover and are checked on before the end of shift.

Review and improve

The business owner also:

- now has regular team meetings to identify new hazards and risks and check controls are working and visits the store more regularly to talk with and recognise workers for their efforts
- also conducts regular visual checks during visits of the storeroom and shop floor so changes are maintained and reviewed
- did a course with his industry association on psychosocial risk management and supporting workers with mental health issues
- implemented a customer feedback system to understand any causes for their frustration in the store such as unavailable products, long queues.

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.