Understanding Psychosocial Hazards

Psychosocial hazards are workplace factors or conditions that can have negative effects on your mental health and overall well-being. Just as physical hazards pose risks to your physical health, psychosocial hazards can affect your mental and emotional health.

Some examples of psychosocial hazards include:

Bullying and Harassment: Any form of bullying, discrimination, or harassment at work can harm your mental health and job satisfaction.

High Job Demands: Excessive workloads, tight deadlines, or constant pressure can lead to stress and/or anxiety.

Workplace Violence: Threats, intimidation, or physical violence can create a hostile and unsafe work environment.

Lack of Control: Feeling like you have little control over your work or decision-making can be frustrating and stressful.

Poor Communication: A lack of clear communication, feedback, or support can contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts.

As with physical hazards in the workplace, it is important that psychosocial hazards are identified, assessed and controlled. When psychosocial hazards are not adequately managed, these hazards can not only impact employees' mental health but also overall job satisfaction, productivity, and the functioning of the organisation.

Identifying Psychosocial Hazards

Psychosocial hazards can be identified through processes like observing how tasks are completed, reviewing data such as hours of work and absenteeism, and consulting with workers. As psychosocial hazards can affect individuals differently, workers might talk about and describe their exposure to psychosocial hazards in different ways.

Managing Psychosocial hazards

Just like managing the risk associated with physical hazards, psychosocial hazards are best managed by eliminating them where possible through processes such as changing the work design. Where hazards cannot be eliminated, a combination of other control measures can be used to reduce the risk such as regular leader check-ins with employees, awareness and resilience training and employee assistance programs.

Your role in managing psychosocial hazards

Recognise Signs: Be aware of signs of psychosocial hazards in your workplace. Changes in behaviour, increased stress, or job dissatisfaction may be indicators.

Report Concerns: If you observe or experience psychosocial hazards, report them to your supervisor, HR, or designated contact person. Your feedback is essential for addressing these issues.

Seek Support: If you're struggling, don't hesitate to seek support. Programmed's EAP is available by calling Australia 1300 687 327 (Australia) 0800 666 367 (New Zealand).

Remember, your mental health is just as important as your physical well-being. By being aware of psychosocial hazards, recognizing warning signs, and promoting a healthy work environment, we can create a workplace where everyone feels safe, supported, and able to perform at their best.