

DRAFT INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

ISO/DIS 45003

ISO/TC 283

Secretariat: **BSI**

Voting begins on:
2020-08-11

Voting terminates on:
2020-11-03

Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work : managing psychosocial risks — Guidelines

*Gestion de la santé et de la sécurité au travail — Santé et sécurité psychologiques en milieu de travail —
Lignes directrices*

ICS: 13.100

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Reference number
ISO/DIS 45003:2020(E)

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Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 283 *Occupational health and safety management*.

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This is the first edition of this document.

A list of all parts in the ISO 45001 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document provides guidance on the management of psychosocial risks at work, as part of an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system.

This document is intended to be used together with ISO 45001 *Occupational health and safety management* which contains requirements and guidance on planning, implementing, reviewing, evaluating and improving an OH&S management system. ISO 45001 highlights that the organization is responsible for the OH&S of workers and others who can be affected by its activities. This responsibility includes promoting and protecting their physical and mental health.

The aim and intended outcomes of the OH&S management system are therefore to prevent work-related injury and ill health to workers and to provide safe and healthy workplaces. Consequently, it is critically important for the organization to eliminate hazards and minimize OH&S risks by taking effective preventive and protective measures, which include measures to manage psychosocial risks.

Psychosocial hazards are increasingly recognized as major challenges to health, safety and well-being at work.

Psychosocial hazards relate to how work is organized, social factors at work and aspects of the work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks. Psychosocial hazards can be present in all organizations and sectors, and from all kinds of work tasks, equipment, and employment arrangements.

Psychosocial hazards can occur in combination with one another and can influence and be influenced by other hazards. Psychosocial risk relates to the potential of these types of hazards to cause several types of outcomes on individual health, safety and well-being and on organizational performance and sustainability. It is important that psychosocial risks are managed in a manner consistent with other OH&S risks, through an OH&S management system, and integrated into the organization's broader business processes.

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Psychosocial risks affect both psychological health and safety and health, safety and well-being at work more broadly. Psychosocial risks are also associated with economic costs to organizations and society.

There are a range of terms that are used in relation to what psychosocial risks affect, including psychological health and mental health. These terms are considered interchangeable and to have the same meaning for the purposes of this document. This document is concerned with all types of impacts on health and safety, and well-being at work.

Negative outcomes for workers can include poor health and associated conditions (e.g. cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes, anxiety, depression, sleep disorders) and associated poor health behaviours (e.g. substance misuse, unhealthy eating), as well as reduced job satisfaction, commitment and productivity.

Although numerous factors can determine the nature and severity of outcomes of psychosocial risks, organizations have a significant role to play in eliminating hazards or minimizing risks. Both the organization and workers have a shared responsibility for maintaining and improving health, safety and well-being at work.

For the organization, the impact of psychosocial risks includes increased costs due to absence from work, turnover, reduced product or service quality, recruitment and training, workplace investigations and litigation, as well as damage to the organization's reputation.

Effective management of psychosocial risk can lead to benefits such as improved worker engagement, enhanced productivity, increased innovation and organizational sustainability.

This document outlines examples of psychosocial hazards arising from work organization, social factors and work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks, as well as a range of control measures that can be used to eliminate hazards or minimize associated risks.

Organizations are responsible for identifying hazards and minimizing the risks associated with them. The participation of workers, in all stages of the process, is critical to the success of managing psychosocial risks.

This document also includes information on what it is important for organizations to consider in relation to raising awareness of psychosocial risks, developing competence in the management of psychosocial risks, supporting the recovery and return to work of affected workers, and planning for and responding to emergency situations.

The success of psychosocial risk management depends on commitment from all levels and functions of the organization, especially from top management.

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Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work : managing psychosocial risks — Guidelines

1 Scope

This document provides guidance with respect to managing psychosocial risk within an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system based on ISO 45001 *Occupational health and safety management systems — Requirements with guidance for use*. It enables organizations to prevent work-related injury and ill health of their workers and other interested parties, and to promote well-being at work. It is applicable to organizations of all sizes and in all sectors, for the development, implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of healthy and safe workplaces.

NOTE 1 When the term 'worker' is used in this document, worker representatives, where they exist, are always implied.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 45001:2018, *Occupational health and safety management systems — Requirements with guidance for use*
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3 Terms and definitions

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For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 45001:2018 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

psychosocial risk

combination of the likelihood of occurrence of exposure to work-related hazard(s) of a psychosocial nature and the severity of injury and ill-health that can be caused by these hazards

Note 1 to entry: Note to entry: Hazards of a psychosocial nature can include aspects of work organization, social factors at work, work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks. Detailed examples of such sources are given in [Table 1](#), [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#) of this document.

3.2

well-being at work

fulfilment of the physical, mental and cognitive needs and expectations of a worker related to their work

Note 1 to entry: Well-being at work can also contribute to the quality of life outside of work.

Note 2 to entry: Well-being at work relates to all aspects of working life, including work organization, social factors at work, work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks.

4 Context of the organization

4.1 Understanding the organization and its context

In relation to managing psychosocial risk, the organization should:

- a) consider the external and internal issues that can affect the achievement of the outcomes of the OH&S management system;
- b) understand the needs and expectations of workers and other relevant interested parties;
- c) consider which of these needs and expectations are, or could become, legal requirements or other requirements;
- d) adjust the design of activities to manage psychosocial risk to suit the specific context of the workplace;
- e) tailor activities to improve the focus, reliability and validity of the process to manage psychosocial risk; and
- f) determine how the assessment of psychosocial risks will be used to make effective action plans.

4.1.1 External issues

The organization should determine external issues relevant to achieving the intended outcomes of the OH&S management system in relation to psychosocial risk. These can include:

- a) the supply chain in which the organization operates, as this can affect psychosocial hazards (e.g. through time pressure, schedules or production pressure);
- b) relationships with contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, providers and other interested parties;
- c) the sharing of workplaces, resources and equipment with other parties (e.g. if the organization collaborates with other organizations on worksites);
- d) customer and/or client requirements for service provision (e.g. customer/client requirements can affect psychosocial hazards through violence, harassment, time pressure);
- e) economic conditions that can affect availability, duration, and location of work;
- f) the nature of work contracts, remuneration, employment conditions and industrial relations;
- g) the demographics of workers who are available for work (e.g. young or ageing workers, increasing retirement ages, gender);
- h) rapid technological changes (e.g. increased connectivity to electronic devices, impact of artificial intelligence and automation technology);
- i) labour force mobility, creating greater diversity among workers with different backgrounds and cultures, and speaking different languages; and
- j) the wider context of the geographical region affecting the organization, including economic issues (e.g. financial situation at all levels affecting the organization: international, national, regional).

4.1.2 Internal issues

Internal issues that can affect the intended outcomes of the OH&S management system in relation to psychosocial risk, can include:

- 1) how the organization is governed and managed (e.g. its organizational structure, assignment of roles and responsibilities, effectiveness and efficiency of its formal and informal decision-making processes; organizational culture; management style; communication style; respect for privacy);

- 2) the organization's level of commitment and direction with respect to psychological health, safety and well-being at work, as set out in policy statements, guidelines, objectives, and strategies;
- 3) other management systems adopted by the organization that can interact with the management of psychosocial risks (e.g. based on ISO 9001 and ISO 14001);
- 4) size and nature of the organization's workforce (e.g. large, small, complex or highly decentralized);
- 5) characteristics of workers and the workforce (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, religion, language, literacy and numeracy);
- 6) competence of workers to recognize psychosocial hazards and manage risks;
- 7) locations of work (e.g. itinerant workforce without a fixed workplace, working remotely, working in isolation or working in remote locations such as rurally);
- 8) workers' terms and conditions (e.g. flexible work arrangements, compensation and benefits, part-time, casual or temporary workforce); and
- 9) adequacy and availability of resources.

4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of workers and other interested parties

In relation to managing psychosocial risk the organization should understand and determine the needs and expectations of workers and other interested parties.

Workers and other interested parties have a range of needs and expectations that can be influenced by psychosocial risks at work. These needs and expectations can include financial security; social interaction and support; inclusion, recognition, reward and accomplishment; personal development and growth; and equal treatment.

4.3 Determining the scope of the OH&S management system

The organization should confirm that the scope of its OH&S management system and its operations and activities with respect to the management of psychosocial risk are specifically addressed by the organization's OH&S management system.

4.4 OH&S management system

The organization should ensure that its OH&S management system remains relevant to its operations and activities with respect to its management of psychosocial risk.

5 Leadership and worker participation

5.1 Leadership and commitment

The successful management of psychosocial risk calls for a commitment throughout the organization. Top management should lead this and managers and workers at all levels should help drive it. Top management should:

- a) demonstrate leadership and commitment to managing psychosocial risk;
- b) identify, monitor and be aware of its roles and responsibilities with respect to managing psychosocial risks;
- c) determine the resources needed and make them available in a timely and efficient manner;
- d) reinforce the sustainability of managing psychosocial risk by including it in strategic plans and existing systems, processes and reporting structures;

- e) protect workers from reprisals when reporting incidents, hazards, risks and opportunities;
- f) communicate how whistle blowers, victims, witnesses, and those who report or raise workplace psychosocial risk concerns, will be protected;
- g) obtain and provide feedback to determine the effectiveness of managing and preventing psychosocial risk within the OH&S management system both in implementation and operation;
- h) empower workers and ensure they are competent to fulfil their roles and responsibilities to manage psychosocial risk;
- i) remove barriers that can limit worker participation, and aim to enhance participation;
- j) actively engage workers in a continual dialogue on the management of psychosocial risk; and
- k) support and encourage workers to actively participate in the management of psychosocial risk in the workplace.

5.2 Policy

In establishing an OH&S policy for the organization, top management should:

- a) ensure that commitments to preventing ill health and injuries related to psychosocial risk, and promoting well-being at work, are included in the OH&S policy;
- b) determine if there is a need for a separate policy about managing psychosocial risk;
- c) consider how other policies (e.g. human resources, corporate social responsibility) support the OH&S policy to achieve common objectives.

The policy should:

- 1) be appropriate to the purpose, size and context of the organization;
- 2) include a commitment to fulfil legal requirements and other requirements related to health, safety and well-being at work, including a commitment to manage psychosocial risk;
- 3) provide a framework for setting and reviewing objectives for the management of psychosocial risk;
- 4) promote and enhance a working environment consistent with the principles of dignity, mutual respect, confidentiality, cooperation and trust in the OH&S management system;
- 5) be communicated to all workers so that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- 6) be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate to the organization.

The organization should consult workers and, where relevant, other interested parties in the development of policy to manage psychosocial risk.

If a specific policy to manage psychosocial risk is developed, it can provide an overall sense of direction. It can be the driver for implementing and improving management of psychosocial risk within the general OH&S management system, so that the organization can maintain and improve its OH&S performance. The policy should enable top management and other workers to understand the overall commitment of the organization and how this can affect individual responsibilities.

5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities

Top management is responsible for the functioning of the OH&S management system and should clarify roles, responsibilities and authorities for managing psychosocial risk in the workplace.

Workers at all levels should take responsibility for those aspects of the OH&S management system, relating to psychosocial risks, over which they have control.

5.4 Consultation and participation of workers

Consultation and participation of workers and, where they exist, workers' representatives is essential for the development, planning, implementation, maintenance, evaluation and continual improvement of healthy and safe workplaces and the success of the process(es) to manage psychosocial risk.

In addition to the general requirements in ISO 45001 (Clause 5.4), the organization should:

- a) provide opportunities for feedback by workers to help the organization determine the effectiveness of the management of psychosocial risks;
- b) encourage participation and engagement, for example by establishing a committee or forum to focus on psychosocial risks, if appropriate to the size and context of the organization.

In smaller organizations, where formal worker representation can be lacking, this consultation process should be directly with workers. Consultation between the organization and workers should take place at all stages of managing psychosocial risk. Both the organization and its workers have specific roles and responsibilities. Health and safety committees, work councils or other representation bodies also have an important role to play.

Involvement in decision-making processes can increase a worker's motivation and commitment to contribute to psychologically healthy and safe workplaces. Being encouraged and supported to participate, rather than feeling forced to take part, is more likely to be effective and sustainable.

Some of the concerns about engaging workers can include worries about pushback, negativity, apathy and the sensitive nature of the impact of psychosocial hazards. Any of these concerns can come from unsuccessful past initiatives. For these reasons, care should be taken to address the concerns of workers and other interested parties when establishing the OH&S management system, and participation and consultation should be encouraged. Engaging worker representatives, where they exist, can help prevent or minimize worker concerns.

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Organizations should also plan to support ongoing consultation, participation and engagement, and get input at all stages of planning and implementation. Active and meaningful involvement of relevant interested parties is an important factor for the management of psychosocial risks in any organization.

6 Planning

6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities

6.1.1 General

The organization should consider the issues referred to in [Clause 4](#) and determine the risks and opportunities that need to be addressed, including:

- a) psychosocial hazards;
- b) prevention of injury and ill-health;
- c) strategies for workers returning to work;
- d) opportunities for improvement; and
- e) the development, review and maintenance of systems, processes and reporting structures with relevance to the management of psychosocial risk.

The organization should prioritize actions based on its assessment of psychosocial risks.

The organization should use the planning process to:

- establish appropriate objectives;