



Designed to identify the impact that stress is having on your employees

Stress Audits are very important for an organisation as they are able to ascertain where, and what, the key stressors are at the individual, team and organisational level. Conducting an AWS Stress Audit can help reduce the likelihood of a stress claim, which we know can be quite costly to a business.

Key facts about the costs of stress to an organisation include:

- *Stress-related workers compensation claims have increased by 400% over the last 10 years. (WorkCover, June 2004)*
- *The average claim cost in NSW in 2003 - 2004 was just over \$22,000 and this is expected to rise to around \$29,000 per claim in 2004 - 2005. (OHS Alert, 2006)*
- *The average NSW claimant takes approximately 20 weeks off work a year. (WorkCover, June 2004)*
- *The total cost of workplace stress in Australia was estimated at 1.2 billion dollars per annum in 2000 (ACTU) and given that research indicates a rise in stress claims since 2000 this figure is expected to be higher. Research has also shown that prolonged stress can lead to and even cause physical conditions (ie. musculoskeletal disorders including strained necks, backs, arms and shoulders). The research has shown that an organisation that has people with musculoskeletal disorders is likely to have people that are working under pressure. (SMH, June 2004)*

### How are Stress Audits conducted?

There are essentially three (3) steps to a successful Stress Audit:

1. **STEP ONE: INFORMATION GATHERING** - There are two parts of this step. Firstly, an Individual Questionnaire. Using the Occupational Stress Indicator questionnaire we are able to gather information from individuals within an organisation about factors that cause them stress. Following this, we conduct focus groups to gather further information about factors causing stress. (This latter part of Step One is optional).
2. **STEP TWO: ANALYSIS AND REPORTING** - This is where the results of Step One are interpreted and key stress factors are identified at the individual, team and organisational levels. A Management Summary Report is prepared summarising the results and outlines recommendations to minimise and manage the identified stressors. Examples of recommendations may include training, individual stress management training and counselling, fitness and therapeutic actions, etc.
3. **STEP THREE: IMPLEMENTATION** - This step involves implementing the recommended actions outlined in the Management Summary Report.

### When should Stress Audits be done?

Stress Audits should typically be carried out annually so that organisations can address any issues and manage any stressors that could be contributing to any one persons stress levels.

### How many staff should be included in a Stress Audit?

For smaller organisations (under 50 staff) it is recommended that all individuals participate. However, for larger organisations (over 50 staff) it may be more cost (and time) effective to select a sample group of employees to participate in the audit. However, it is important to ensure the sample itself is large enough and diverse enough to ensure it captures all types of individuals within the organisation.

*The term mental disorder refers to a range of psychological conditions for which workers compensation may be paid, including clinical depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Although stress itself is not a compensable condition, it is however one of many possible factors that may contribute to the contraction or aggravation of a compensable psychological condition.*

*The total gross incurred cost of mental disorder claims was \$91.6 million with an average of \$28,597. The total time lost as a result of mental disorder claims was 60,858 weeks, with an average of 20 weeks per claim.*

*(Workers Compensation Statistics 2004/05, WorkCover NSW)*

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