GuardingMinds @ WORK

Suggested Actions and Resources

PROTECTION OF PHYSICAL SAFETY

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where management takes appropriate action to address physical hazards in order to protect the psychological health and safety of workers.

Engage your employees to improve protection of physical safety

Putting protection of physical safety On the Agenda is easy with these resources. A workshop slide presentation and facilitator guide help you have a productive conversation with your team about this psychosocial factor and each of the relevant statements from the Guarding Minds at Work survey.

If this factor shows up as a relative strength in your workplace, have a team discussion to find out why they scored this factor higher than the national average. This can lead to appreciation and understanding of what is already good. Policies and processes can also be developed or refined to continue to support positive protection of physical safety.

If this factor has been flagged as an area of concern in your workplace, engage all stakeholders in discussion about which actions might provide the best solutions. You can use ideas from the list below to begin the conversation. When everyone contributes to improving psychological health and safety, the responsibility is shared, the outcomes are more effective, and the effort is sustainable.

Below are actions and resources related to improving protection of physical safety. This list does not contain every solution. There may be other ideas that you find or think of and want to try. However, these suggestions can help provide a strong and cost-effective foundation for addressing protection of physical safety.

The practical strategies come from research studies, have been recommended as best practices, or have been applied effectively in workplaces. The resources included here are free. You can also find excellent services available at a cost from a variety of reputable providers.

Once you have reviewed the actions and resources below, we encourage you to use the Action Planning process to help you think critically about which combination of free, paid, or internal resources will best meet the needs in your workplace.

Actions by statements

If there are specific protection of physical safety statements from your Guarding Minds at Work survey that you want to address you may want to consider one of the actions or resources provided directly under the statement below. More general actions and resources, relevant to protection of physical safety, are also included at the end.

1. **My employer takes appropriate action to protect my physical safety at work.**
   - Depending on your industry, sector, and region the regulations may differ, but Employment Standards in Canada offers you links to the relevant resources.
   - Supervisor Health and Safety Awareness in 5 Steps from the Government of Ontario introduces supervisors to their responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Each province and territory may be different, but it is likely something similar will be available through your relevant employment standards agency.
   - New Worker Orientation Guidelines by the Public Service of British Columbia includes a checklist of occupational safety items that must be included in training for certain workplaces and can be further customized to your workplace.
2. **My employer offers sufficient training to help protect my physical safety at work (e.g., emergency preparedness, safe lifting, violence prevention).**
   - Workers, supervisors and employers may have rights and duties when dealing with workplace violence and harassment. Developed for Ontario employers, this guide helps readers better understand those rights and duties: Understand the Law on Workplace Violence and Harassment.
3. **When physical accidents occur or physical risks are identified, my employer responds effectively.**
   - OH&S Legislation in Canada – Injury Reporting provides the general injury reporting requirements for each jurisdiction in Canada.
4. **I have the equipment and tools I need to do my job in a physically safe way (e.g., protective clothing, adequate lighting, ergonomic seating).**
   - For workplaces that require personal protective equipment (PPE), Designing an Effective PPE Program provides an introduction to PPE and program design.
5. **My employer responds appropriately when workers raise concerns about physical safety.**
   - Employer and Employee Duties offers guidance on the duties of employers and employees that generally apply with respect to federal employers. When the safety concern involves other employees, Addressing Co-worker Reactions may provide some helpful approaches to responding to the issues, but also how to communicate in a way that avoids the employee feeling less safe.

Additional actions and resources

- Review work scheduling practices to ensure they do not impose undue risk of psychological harm.

  Extended Workday: Health & Safety Issues *discusses the pros, cons, and risks of extended workdays.*

Rotational Shiftwork *includes examples of ways to make shiftwork safer in the "What are some organizational approaches?" section*

- Review and, if needed, revise job descriptions to include identification of physical hazards with particular attention to those that may be hazardous to psychological health.
- Respond promptly and effectively to incidents, work-related illnesses, and accidents.

  Leadership Crisis Response *- a leader's response in a time of distress can have an impact on the workplace and employees. Thoughtful action and preventive measures can help facilitate the best possible response while reducing stress for everyone involved.*
- Document all incidents and accidents, as well as responses.
- Ensure that timely and effective supports are available following a critical incident (e.g., defusing, debriefing, employee and family assistance programs, and psychological treatment).

  Employee Assistance Programs and Mental Health-Related Issues *- make use of your employee and family assistance program to help respond to mental health-related issues.*

  Prepare a customized list of mental health resources using the Mental Health Resource List *that includes organizational and community resources to help employees that are experiencing a mental health issue or crisis. Share the form with all employees and keep it up to date and readily accessible for when help is needed.*
- Provide additional supports and services for employees working in high physical risk positions or environments.

  Sector Specific Strategies *- some psychological health and safety issues can be unique to certain sectors of the workforce. Research has identified some of these issues, as well as specific strategies that may help.*
- Ensure employees have sufficient opportunities and facilities for rest (particularly individuals working shifts or extended hours).
- Provide employees with clear guidelines on the identification of physical hazards to encourage safe, timely, and effective reporting.
- Provide employees with the knowledge and skills needed to help cope with the psychological impact of incidents and accidents.
- Ensure that health and safety programs and policies are clearly communicated to, and understood by, all employees, including new hires.
- Make health and safety committee reports public and accessible to all employees (e.g., via posting on intranet, newsletter, staff room, or bulletin boards).
- Communicate relevant provincial, territorial or federal legislative or regulatory changes in the area of health and safety to all employees.
- Communicate organizational and industry safety policies to all employees.
- Maintain up-to-date protocols for monitoring, reporting and responding to physical hazards.
- Include protection of employee physical safety in organizational vision and values.
- Implement policies to protect and support employees who report physical risks.

Use this space to jot down additional ideas and suggested actions:

To consider which actions are most likely to result in the outcomes you desire, use the Action Planning process to guide your decision making and help you identify timelines, milestones, budgets, responsibilities, and measures of success.

Thank you to Workplace Safety and Prevention Services for their generous contribution to the development of these action items. For more tools and resources, please visit Think Mental Health.ca

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