

# Preventing psychological injury at work during COVID-19



Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic has been a stressful time for all Australians.

While you might not be able to help the stress workers are facing at home, you must eliminate or minimise the risk to psychological health and safety at work so far as is reasonably practicable.

Work health and safety (WHS) laws cover risks to psychological health too.

**Under WHS laws, employers must eliminate or minimise work-related risk to psychological health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable.**



## Psychosocial hazards

**A work-related psychosocial hazard is anything in the design or management of work that causes stress.**

COVID-19 may have introduced or increased psychosocial hazards in your workplace including:

- exposure to physical hazards and poor environmental conditions (for example, exposure to COVID-19 or lack of personal protective equipment)
- exposure to violence, aggression, traumatic events and discrimination (for example, aggressive customers)
- increased work demand (for example, delivery drivers working longer hours)
- low support and isolated work (for example, working from home)
- poor workplace relationships (for example, lack of communication and decreased interaction)
- poor organisational change management (for example, changing responsibilities and restructures due to COVID-19), and
- increased emotional demands (for example, nurses supporting patients who can't see family).

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**Together, we can create safer workplaces for everyone.**

Find out more at [safeworkmonth.swa.gov.au](https://safeworkmonth.swa.gov.au) or go to [swa.gov.au/coronavirus](https://swa.gov.au/coronavirus).

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## 4 steps to preventing psychological injury at work

### Step 1: Identify hazards

Identify psychological hazards and risks by:

- talking and listening to your workers
- inspecting your workplace
- taking note of how your workers interact
- reviewing reports and records, and
- using a survey tool to gather information.

### Step 2: Assess risks

Consider what could happen if workers are exposed to the identified hazards and risks.

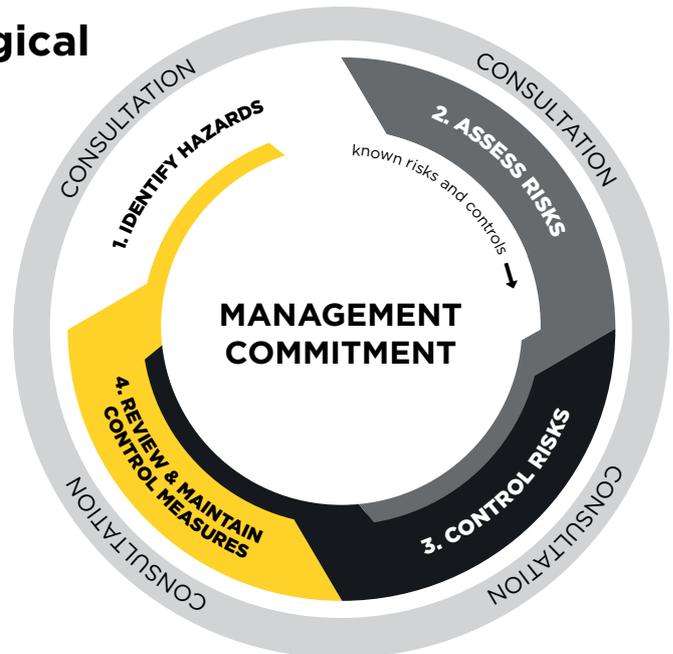
### Step 3: Control risks

Where possible, eliminate the risk. This is always the safest option, but if it isn't possible, minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable through planning and prevention.

### Step 4: Review and maintain control measures

Maintain, monitor and review control measures regularly to ensure they remain effective.

**Consult** your workers throughout the process. You should use agreed consultation processes such as health and safety representatives or committees if you have them.



### For more information:

- Safe Work Australia's Infographic: [Four steps to preventing psychological injury at work](#) shows how the risk management process can be applied to psychosocial risks.
- Safe Work Australia's [Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties](#) provides guidance to anyone who has a WHS duty to prevent and manage harm to workers' psychological health.
- Safe Work Australia's [COVID-19 information on mental health](#) includes more information and links to support services.

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