

Stress at Work: Coping with Changes & Challenges

A challenge can motivate us to rise to the occasion and accomplish great things. When challenge turns to stress, the negative effects cost us productivity and peace of mind. It's important to mitigate workplace stress, and stem its resulting illness and injury.

It's not uncommon to lose sight of the bigger picture when in the midst of significant change. Though these are unusual times, changes and challenges are a normal part of life.

Bearing in mind the core commitments we hold and moving toward habits and practices that sustain us make it far easier to ride out the occasional jolts and turbulence.

Stress Management

Job stress can pose a real threat to the health and safety of employees. Without ways to manage



stress, demands at work can take their toll. Like HDL and LDL cholesterol, there are good and bad kinds of stress.

Harmful Job Stress: Adverse physical and emotional responses occurring when job requirements do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of an individual.

This can lead to poor health and injury in otherwise healthy people. When demands cannot be met, relaxation is replaced by exhaustion, and there is a feeling of being continually strained without satisfaction.



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Helpful Job Stress: Also known as "challenge", this is energizing and motivates us to learn, grow, and master our jobs. It keeps us alert and occupied. Overcoming challenges leaves us relaxed and satisfied in our work. Most of us perform well with mild to moderate stress.

Facing Challenges

Of course, response to stress varies by individual. A strain to one person may not be an issue for another. See fellow OHSU employees' tips on 'stress management at work' on page 3.

As it turns out, less-than-ideal working conditions often affect everyone. Therefore, the greatest potential for reduction in job stress can be achieved by identifying and improving six key categories of workplace stress. See more about this on page 3.



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Environmental Health & Radiation Safety

503-494-7795



Topic of the Month:

FIRE CODE COMPLIANCE

This information is critical to life safety in the event of a fire and has broad application to all OHSU buildings.

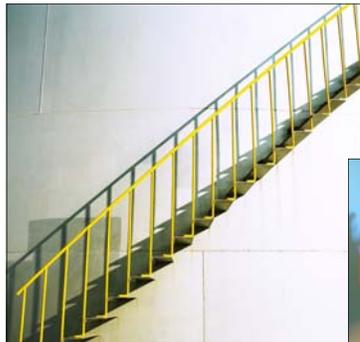
Periodic inspections of OHSU buildings are not just conducted by internal resources. External agencies such as the City of Portland, the State Fire Marshal, The Joint Commission, and others, inspect for compliance with Fire Codes. Inspections lead to the identification and correction of conditions that might otherwise lead to loss of life and fire damage to OHSU property.



The following is a brief checklist of rules to which we all must comply:

- ❑ **Suite and office numbers must be clearly posted in visible locations.** This applies primarily to entrances and main areas.

- ❑ **Exit-ways, stairways, fire escapes should be free of clutter.** You shouldn't be running an obstacle course to leave the building.



- ❑ **Pull stations, and fire extinguishers must be free from obstructions.**

Do not block access to or use these areas for storage.

- ❑ **Exits must be clearly marked, and EXIT signs must be illuminated.** Report burned out bulbs ASAP to Facilities Triage at 4-8054.



- ❑ **Fire doors must be self-closing and must freely latch upon close.** Fire doors help minimize damage in case of fire. Magnetic "hold open" devices are tied to the fire response system so that they release automatically.

- ❑ **Wedges and door stops must never be used.** This applies to anything used to keep a door open—we've seen chairs, washcloths, even a refrigerator!

Special note: Departments may choose, if it is deemed appropriate for the specific area in question, to have "hold-open" devices installed which would allow doors to automatically close on engagement of fire detection devices. Questions? 4-7795

- ❑ **Multiple-outlet power strips are acceptable in the following circumstances:** if they are UL-listed, use 15-amp circuit breakers, and are 15' long maximum. They can never be plugged one into another and never used with medical equipment.



- ❑ **Electrical boxes and switches must have intact and undamaged cover plates.** Cover plates confine any wiring problems to the safety of the junction box.
- ❑ **Electrical panels must be unobstructed and easily accessible.** Thirty-six inches (36") of clearance must be maintained in front of electrical panels.
- ❑ **Fire extinguishers must be serviced annually.** OHSU provides this annual service on all required units. In addition, The Joint Commission requires all fire extinguishers in healthcare areas to be inspected monthly. This task is performed by designated OHSU staff.



- ❑ **Combustible material** (anything that can burn) **is prohibited within 18" to the ceiling in all areas with fire sprinklers, even in storage areas.**

Problems with any OHSU facility should be promptly reported to Facilities Triage at 503-494-8054.

SAFETYTEAM MEMBERSHIP

SafetyTeam Members spend approximately 15 minutes per month to help ensure a safe workplace at OHSU. Members receive a monthly email with a link to this newsletter and a few short questions to answer.

Members channel safety concerns from departments and locations around OHSU to the SafetyTeam Coordinator, who then triages resources and when necessary, brings concerns to the OHSU Safety Committee.

To join, contact safeteam@ohsu.com or 4-7795.

6 Key Categories of Workplace Stress

Task Design - Balanced workloads, regular breaks, reasonable hours, appropriate ergonomics and task variety make for more successful and satisfying efforts.

Management Style - Clear communication and opportunities to air concerns such as in department meetings encourage clarity and a big picture view. A sense of contribution reduces stress.

Interpersonal Relationships - The cultivation of a positive social environment through teambuilding as well as mutual support amongst co-workers and supervisors can greatly reduce workplace stress. We are all social creatures!

Work Roles - Clear and reasonable job expectations, appropriately assigned responsibility and good matching of employee to the job are all essential.

Career Concerns - Growth potential, opportunities for advancement, and adequate preparation for job changes may be addressed through employee-management communication. Continued training at OHSU and elsewhere provides more flexibility, especially given the national job climate.

Environmental Conditions - Comfortable working conditions including adequate space, sound and temperature and proper workstation design help eliminate a whole host of stress sources.

EHRs Staff Tips for Less Stress

- Get enough sleep each night and eat right.
- Refresh with slow deep breaths and/or stretching.
- Enjoy crossing items off an actual 'to-do' list.
- Find efficiencies to make a burden lighter.
- Take team building breaks such as group lunches.
- Rejuvenate with a short walk or other physical activity.
- Invest in effective time management.
- Read the Public Safety Blotter!
- Bike commuting makes an excellent transition into work and at the end of the day!



Links to Related OHSU Resources

OHSU Employee Wellness Program:

<http://www.healthfuture.org/ozone/>

Career Development Center:

<http://ozone.ohsu.edu/hr/training/careercenter/index.shtml>

Bike Commuter Program:

<http://ozone.ohsu.edu/parking/pages/bike.shtml>

For a current issue of SafetyNews online, and for archives, visit:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/ehrs/safety/gen/safetynews.cfm>

The SafetyTeam page is available at:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/ehrs/safety/gen/safeteam.cfm>

These pages are updated regularly. Send suggestions to the SafetyTeam Coordinator at:

safeteam@ohsu.edu

Questions? Ask Environmental Health & Radiation Safety:

503-494-7795

