



STRESS KIT FOR SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

How to use the Kit

The kit contains practical tools to help Safety Representatives tackle Stress in the workplace. These tools are:

CHECKLIST

QUESTIONNAIRE

MODEL AGREEMENT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LEGAL REMEDIES

STRESS MOT

They can be used

- to raise members awareness of stress (questionnaire, stress MOT)
- to identify potential stressors and perceived levels of stress in the workplace (checklist, questionnaire, stress MOT)
- to negotiate about stress with management (model agreement, legal remedies)



CHECKLIST FOR SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

IDENTIFYING WORKPLACE STRESSORS

How to use the checklist

The following checklist can be used as a simple tool for starting to assess the potential for stress in your organisation. It is set out in eight parts, which correspond to the causes of workplace stress identified in the document, *Preventing Stress at Work – An MSF Guide*. The questions in the checklist should also be asked by employers as part of their risk assessment. You can check some of the questions as you undertake your workplace inspections. Other questions you will need to discuss further with your members.

How to use the results

The checklist is designed so that if you have mainly Yes answers you have identified potential sources of stress in your workplace. The more Yes answers you have the greater the number of potential stressors. If you have a high number of Yes answers under any single heading you may have identified a particular problem area.

You will need to discuss with your members and other MSF representatives how to raise the results of your checklist analysis with management. You may find it useful to discuss the results at a meeting of the Safety Committee.

PART 1 – THE JOB IN YOUR ORGANISATION

1. Do any jobs involve contact with patients, customers, clients, and members of the public? YES / NO
2. Do any jobs carry responsibility for patients, clients, members of the public? YES / NO
3. Are there any jobs in which there is a risk of violence or threatening behaviour? YES / NO
4. Do any jobs involve possible exposure to
 - a) harmful chemicals? YES / NO
 - b) Infectious agents? YES / NO
 - c) Harmful fumes? YES / NO
 - d) Dusts? YES / NO
5. Do any jobs involve possible exposure to
 - a) noise? YES / NO
 - b) Vibration? YES / NO
 - c) Ionising radiation? YES / NO
 - d) Extreme heat? YES / NO
 - e) Extreme cold? YES / NO
6. Do any jobs involve frequent repetitive tasks? YES / NO
7. Are there any jobs that are very monotonous? YES / NO
8. Are there any jobs, which are carried out, mainly alone, in isolation? YES / NO
9. Do any jobs involve wearing protective clothing/equipment for long periods? YES / NO
10. Are there any jobs which involve working with dangerous machinery? YES / NO
11. Do any jobs involve long periods at a VDU? YES / NO
12. Do any jobs involve frequent/long periods away from home? YES / NO

PART 2 – WORK ORGANISATION AND WORKLOADS

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------|
| 1. | Are there any employees who are required to work shifts, Rotas, unsocial hours? | YES / NO |
| 2. | Is it difficult for employees to take regular breaks? | YES / NO |
| 3. | Is it the case that there is no task variation where repetitive jobs are involved? | YES / NO |
| 4. | Are any jobs paced by machine? | YES / NO |
| 5. | Do computer based jobs have performance checking facilities built into the software? | YES / NO |
| 6. | Are pay systems based on performance? | YES / NO |
| 7. | Are work targets unrealistic? | YES / NO |
| 8. | Do workloads fluctuate between peak and slack periods? | YES / NO |
| 9. | Are workloads generally too heavy? | YES / NO |
| 10. | Are there any jobs where there is not enough to do? | YES / NO |
| 11. | Do employees think that workloads are distributed unfairly? | YES / NO |
| 12. | Are tasks inappropriate to people's level of skills of training? | YES / NO |

PART 3 – DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER ONES JOB

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | Are employees unable to plan their own work, and how to do it? | YES / NO |
| 2. | Are employees unable to participate in decisions, which affect their job? | YES / NO |
| 3. | Are all the decisions about the job taken by someone else? | YES / NO |
| 4. | Is the place of work outside the employee's control? | YES / NO |
| 5. | Are changes to the job made without consulting employees? | YES / NO |
| 6. | Is it the case that employees do not know how their work fits in with other jobs in the organisation? | YES / NO |

PART 4 – WORK ENVIRONMENT

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| 1. | Is the workplace overcrowded and/or badly laid out? | YES / NO |
| 2. | Are workstations badly designed with everything out of the workers reach? | YES / NO |
| 3. | Are employees unable to adjust their work equipment to their individual requirements? | YES / NO |
| 4. | Are employees unable to adjust their work equipment to their individual requirements? | YES / NO |
| 5. | Is the work environment uncomfortably hot? | YES / NO |
| 6. | Is the work environment too cold? | YES / NO |
| 7. | Is the workplace poorly ventilated? | YES / NO |
| 8. | Is the workplace noisy? | YES / NO |
| 9. | Is the lighting level inappropriate to the work? | YES / NO |
| 10. | Is exposure to chemicals, dust, fumes inadequately controlled? | YES / NO |
| 12. | Is the working environment generally drab, badly maintained and inadequately cleaned? | YES / NO |
| 12. | Are employees exposed to environmental tobacco smoke? | YES / NO |

PART 5 – CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| 1. | Are pay levels generally low in comparison with other organisations? | YES / NO |
| 2. | Is pay related to individual performance? | YES / NO |
| 3. | Are significant numbers of jobs based on short term/fixed term contracts? | YES / NO |
| 4. | Are people required to work long hours? | YES / NO |
| 5. | Are people required to work shifts? | YES / NO |
| 6. | Are shift arrangements constantly changed? | YES / NO |
| 7. | Is there inadequate provision for | |
| | Holiday leave? | YES / NO |
| | Maternity leave? | YES / NO |
| | Paternity leave? | YES / NO |
| | Parental leave? | YES / NO |
| | Carers leave? | YES / NO |
| 8. | Are job descriptions unclear or ambiguous? | YES / NO |
| 9. | Are job descriptions non-existent? | YES / NO |
| 10. | Is there a lack of career development and promotion possibilities? | YES / NO |
| 11. | Is it the case that a few or no training opportunities are provided? | YES / NO |
| 12. | Do vacant posts remain unfilled for long periods? | YES / NO |

PART 6 – CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

1. Is the culture over-competitive? YES / NO
2. Are people under pressure to put the job first? YES / NO
3. Is it considered disloyal not to take on extra work/hours? YES / NO
4. Is bullying considered acceptable to get things done? YES / NO
5. Is it the case that managers and supervisors receive little or no training in management or human relation's skills? YES / NO
6. Do managers have a confrontational approach? YES / NO
7. Are communicators in the organisation generally poor? YES / NO
8. Do people feel that they are not consulted about management decisions? YES / NO
9. Are discriminatory attitudes and behaviour tolerated within the organisation? YES / NO
10. Do employees feel that they cannot ask for support from their colleagues and/or supervisor? YES / NO
11. Is doing things at the last minute' the norm? YES / NO
12. Are managers unable to delegate effectively and with direction? YES / NO
13. Do employees feel under-valued? YES / NO
14. Is it the case that health and safety is not taken seriously? YES / NO
15. Is there a negative attitude to trade unions and elected representatives? YES / NO

PART 7 – ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------|
| 1. | Has their recently been/is there going to be any merger or take-over? | YES / NO |
| 2. | Has their been/is there going to be any relocation of jobs? | YES / NO |
| 3. | Are staff being required to travel long distances to the new location? | YES / NO |
| 4. | Is the organisation going through a restructuring/rationalisation exercise? | YES / NO |
| 5. | Are compulsory redundancies taking place? | YES / NO |
| 6. | Is the organisation seeking voluntary redundancies/early retirements? | YES / NO |
| 7. | Have there been cut backs in available resources? | YES / NO |
| 8. | Are technological changes being introduced? | YES / NO |
| 9. | Has there been a change of management? | YES / NO |
| 10. | Are new management techniques being introduced? | YES / NO |
| 11. | Are any attempts being made to withdraw collective agreements and impose individual contracts? | YES / NO |
| 12. | Have changes taken place without consultation with the employees affected? | YES / NO |

PART 8 – WORK RELATIONSHIPS

1. Are work relationships generally poor? YES / NO
2. Do managers behave in an authoritarian way? YES / NO
3. Are employees afraid to approach their supervisor? YES / NO
4. Is it the case that managers do not receive training in human relations skills? YES / NO
5. Do employees feel that they are treated unfairly by supervisors? YES / NO
6. Do supervisors behave in a discriminatory way? YES / NO
7. Does harassment of women, black people, people with disabilities, or gay people take place on a regular basis? YES / NO
8. Are any individuals subject to bullying, intimidation or other forms of victimisation at work? YES / NO
9. Do employees feel unable to seek support from their supervisor or colleagues? YES / NO
10. Do employees lack a regular forum to meet and discuss problems together? YES / NO
11. Are patients, clients, customers treated in an uncaring manner? YES / NO
12. Are employees unable to take their breaks together in a communal area? YES / NO



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYEES

STRESS AT WORK

HOW TO USE THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire has been designed to identify people's feelings and attitudes towards their work and working environment and to determine whether they are suffering any symptoms of stress. Safety representatives should distribute the questionnaire to members and non-members with a covering letter such as the sample attached. You should liaise with other Amicus representatives so that you can use the opportunity created by the questionnaire to recruit new members.

The questionnaire is intended to be confidential and anonymous in order to encourage maximum participation. You may wish to circulate it one department at a time so you can ascertain whether a particular department has a problem.

HOW TO USE THE RESULTS.

The greater the extent to which negative feelings and attitudes are revealed the greater the extent and frequency that symptoms of stress are reported the greater will be the likelihood of employees in the organisation suffering stress.

You should report back the results of the questionnaire to participants by means of a circular, a news letter or a group meeting.

You should then decide how to raise the results of the questionnaire with management.

STRESS AT WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Department

2 Do any of the following describe your work/working environment? (please tick)

| | |
|---|--|
| Insufficient time to do the job | |
| Have to juggle quantity with quality | |
| Long working hours | |
| Lack of control over own job | |
| Job controlled by new technology | |
| Inadequate training/knowledge to do the job | |
| Job does not stretch capabilities | |
| Poor relationship with boss | |
| Poor relationship with colleagues | |
| Lack of career structure | |
| No sense of belonging | |
| Lack of job security | |
| Little/no participation in decision making | |
| Isolated | |
| Too hot | |
| Too cold | |
| Noisy working environment | |
| Inadequate ventilation | |
| Other (please specify) | |

3 Which of the following best describes your current attitude to your work? (please tick)

| | |
|---|--|
| I am completely happy with and fulfilled by my work/working environment | |
| I sometimes feel dissatisfied with my work/working environment but it is not adversely affecting me | |
| I am not satisfied with my work/working environment and I believe may be affecting my health and home life | |
| I am very dissatisfied with my work/working environment and I am certain that it is seriously affecting my health and home life | |
| Other (please specify) | |
| My main problem at work is: | |

4 Do you suffer from the following

| | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Headaches/migraine | | | |
| Aches and pains | | | |
| Indigestion | | | |
| Stomach disorders | | | |
| Sleeplessness | | | |
| Changes in appetite | | | |
| Exhaustion | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | |

5 At work do you feel: (please tick)

| | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Irritated | | | |
| Angry | | | |
| Frustrated | | | |
| Helpless | | | |
| Anxious | | | |
| Confused | | | |
| Depressed | | | |
| Unable to concentrate | | | |
| Bored | | | |
| Over tired | | | |
| Happy | | | |
| Enthusiastic/motivated | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | |

6 At home do you (please tick)

| | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|--|-------|-----------|-------|
| Find it difficult to forget work? | | | |
| Find it hard to relax/unwind? | | | |
| Bring your work problems/moods home? | | | |
| Find you are not listening to your family? | | | |
| Feel lethargic/drained of energy | | | |
| Snap at people/be short tempered | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | |

7 Are you (please circle)

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|----------------|----------------|
| Drinking (alcohol) | More | Less | About the same | As a year ago? |
| Smoking | More | Less | About the same | As a year ago? |
| Exercising | More | Less | About the same | As a year ago? |

Please return the questionnaire to

Model Agreement on Preventing Stress at Work

This Agreement on stress at work between (employer) and Amicus explains the procedures to deal with stress. It is part of the Health & Safety Policy and will be regularly reviewed and updated. The next review date will be.....

1. Definition of Stress

Any ill-health condition experienced because of an employee's perceived inability to meet the work demands and pressures placed upon them.

It is recognised that the causes of stress may lie within the organisation, the work environment, the job itself or work relationships.

2. The Employer

- i) Will develop a policy on the prevention of stress in consultation with the Health & Safety Committee and with trade union Safety Representatives and will develop local strategies and guidelines to all staff based on this policy.
- ii) Will assess the potential for stress arising from the work, to identify any group of employees at risk and take practical steps to eliminate/reduce the risks.
- iii) Will investigate causes of stress and report to the Health & Safety Committee.
- iv) Will provide support, including paid time off for confidential counselling and professional help where appropriate, to those who are suffering stress.
- v) Will agree to a change of duties/location/redeployment for a person who is unable to undertake their former duties as a result of experiencing stress without prejudice to future prospects or any detriment.
- vi) Will in consultation with Safety Representatives provide information and training about stress, the causes and effects, and how to seek help.
- vii) Will take seriously and investigate report(s) from employees about cases of stress and take preventative measures to reduce the risk.
- viii) Will monitor and review regularly the prevention of stress policy in consultation with Health & Safety Committee.
- ix) Will identify the person responsible for the implementation of the prevention of stress policy.

STRESS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LEGAL REMEDIES

Stress is a feature of nearly every workplace and some pressure is seen as desirable to motivate and encourage people. The Health and Safety Executive definition of stress is that it is undesirable pressure. Such stress can also cause injury and have devastating consequences.

Members who are suffering as a result of stress in the workplace may be able to take legal action against their employer. But legal remedies are limited and in any case are not the solution to the issue of stress at work. A recent Court of Appeal ruling on work-related stress cases has highlighted how difficult it is to win a stress claim and underlines the importance of collective action in the form of industrial negotiations with management.

Isolated incidents of stress at work are rare and are usually evidence of endemic management failure.

However, knowledge of the legal remedies can be a useful negotiating tool for union representatives. This guide sets out what legal remedies – both in the fields of employment and health and safety legislation – may apply according to the severity of the problem.

PREVENTION IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN CURE: NIPPING THE PROBLEM IN THE BUD

The best answer to a potentially harmful and stressful situation is to prevent it occurring. Employers have a duty to look after the health and safety of their employees and a statutory duty to consult with and inform health and safety representatives. These obligations should be used and are especially relevant when helping members suffering from stress.

When the nature of the work being demanded causes concern, but has yet to have an impact on workers' health, there is health and safety legislation that can be used to try to stop a problem with stress developing.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

There is a legal requirement on employers to carry out risk assessments of the workplace. A risk assessment should determine whether reasonably practicable control measures are in place to prevent risk. It should include an assessment of whether there is a hazard likely to give rise to injury including psychiatric injury, or ill health. Amicus MSF has produced a Risk Assessment profile, which is available from the Health and Safety Department.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR) set out an employer's obligations to:

- avoid risks
- evaluate risks that cannot be avoided
- combat risks at source
- adapt the work to the individual
- adapt to the technical process
- replace the dangerous by the less dangerous
- develop a coherent prevention policy
- give collective protective measures priority over individual
- give appropriate instructions to employee

MHSWR regulation 13 (1) states:

'Every employer shall, in entrusting tasks to his employees take into account their capabilities as regards health and safety'

HSE guidance says that the assessment should include an assessment of employees' vulnerability to stress.

LEGAL REMEDIES

Breaches of the regulations should be brought to the attention of the employers and may be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. There is an important role here for the trade union health and safety representative. The HSE may investigate a breach and will in exceptional circumstances take action.

WHEN STRESS STARTS TO HURT

If stress at work starts causing an individual to take time off work, there are legal remedies that can be referred to as part of the negotiations with the employer to remove the cause of stress and prevent clinical injury.

MEDICAL EVIDENCE AND REGISTERING THE COMPLAINT

It is important to make management aware that stress is the cause of an individual's absence. The recent Court of Appeal cases place the emphasis on the individual proving that their employer was aware that they were off work due to stress caused by their work.

The individual must:

- obtain medical evidence in the form of a doctor's certificate, which states that stress is the cause of absence;
- register with the employer that the stress is being caused by work

It is in the employer's interest to avoid losing more working days due to stress, and especially to prevent the problem spiralling into a personal injury claim against them.

But in any future argument over negligence the employer will be able to avoid liability if the employee cannot prove effectively that their employer knew that the stress was caused by work.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

There are some aspects of employment rights legislation that may be considered as part of negotiations with the employer.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

It is important to put the employer on notice of their duty to alter work practices to avoid liability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). The employee's illness may not count as a disability, but it is a useful negotiating tool to point out that if nothing is done they may become disabled – at which point the employer's duty to adjust will apply immediately.

CONSTRUCTIVE UNFAIR DISMISSAL

An employer who fails to take steps to prevent problems arising with stress at work may be in breach of their implied duty of trust and confidence towards the employee, or their implied duty to take care of their health and safety. Negotiations with the employer might usefully point out the potential of a constructive unfair dismissal claim against them if they do nothing to address the problem.

If the breach is fundamental, going to the heart of the contract, then the employee is entitled to resign and regard himself or she as constructively dismissed. However, in reality, no union or lawyer should recommend the employee leaves, as the prospect of winning proper compensation is often very low.

LEGAL REMEDIES

Claims for either personal injury or disability discrimination at this stage are unlikely to succeed.

But note that a claim under the DDA must be made within three months of the event complained of and one for unfair dismissal must be lodged with the employment tribunal within three months of the termination of employment.

WHEN STRESS CAUSES ILLNESS

Stress itself is not a medical condition, but it may eventually cause a recognised medical condition such as anxiety or depression. Should this happen then the legal remedies above may be available.

PERSONAL INJURY CLAIMS

If the illness has been caused by work-related stress then the employee may be able to bring a claim for compensation for the injury. But personal injury claims for work-related stress are extremely difficult to win.

As stated above the emphasis is on the individual to prove:

- they have a recognised psychiatric injury or illness or physical illness or injury caused by stress, such as diabetes, ulcers
- their work posed a real risk of causing psychiatric and physical illness and the injury was foreseeable in that the employer knew or ought to have known the risk.
- given the foreseeable risk the employer failed to take reasonably practicable steps
- the injury was caused by the employer's failure.

LEGAL REMEDY

Claims for compensation for personal injury can be made through the High Court or County Court and must be made within three years of the injury.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

If the worker's medical condition falls within the definition of disability in the DDA then it may be possible to take a claim under the employer's duty to adjust.

The definition of disability covers medical conditions where the worker has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial adverse impact on their day-to-day activities, which has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.

Unlike in personal injury claims, the cause of the condition under the DDA is irrelevant. It need not be work-related. But for the duty to adjust to apply, the employer must know of the disability. This includes 'constructive' knowledge where the employer ought to know by picking it up from the nature of the worker's absences or symptoms, or where the employer's occupational health department is aware.

The duty to adjust requires the employer to carry out reasonable changes in the workplace to prevent the disabled person being put at a disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments include:

- allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person
- assigning the individual to a different place of work, including home working
- transferring the individual to another job
- altering or reducing the individual's hours of work
- allowing time off for treatment

What is reasonable adjustment depends ultimately on all the circumstances such as the resources of the employer and the extent to which the worker is disadvantaged by the lack of adjustment.

LEGAL REMEDY

If an employer fails to carry out reasonable adjustments then the worker has the right to bring a claim in the employment tribunal under the DDA for a declaration of breach, a recommendation and compensation for any financial loss and injury to feelings. Claims must be lodged within three months of the failure to adjust.

CONSTRUCTIVE UNFAIR DISMISSAL

As set out above, an employee may be able to pursue a constructive unfair dismissal claim.

WHEN STRESS LEADS TO DISMISSAL

If an employer responds to a worker's illness or sickness absence by dismissing them there may be remedies under employment rights legislation.

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

If an employee is dismissed because of ill health, whether or not it a work related illness they may have a right to claim unfair dismissal. It will need to be shown that the decision to dismiss is unfair and that the correct procedures have been followed.

LEGAL REMEDY

A claim for unfair dismissal must be lodged with the employment tribunal within three months of dismissal. There is a limit of £53,500 for a compensatory award made by a tribunal, but in most cases the awards are a lot less than £10,000.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

A decision by an employer that relates to disability, such as dismissing an employee because of their sickness absence record, may be in breach of the DDA. The Act makes it unlawful to treat a disabled person less favourably because of their disability, unless the less favourable treatment can be justified.

LEGAL REMEDY

A claim under the DDA for a declaration, recommendation and/or compensation can be brought in the employment tribunal within three months of the date of the employer's decision or dismissal in question. There is no limit to the compensation that can be awarded.

HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT ON LONG-TERM SICK LEAVE

Following a recent employment appeal tribunal decision in the case of *Kigass*, under the Working Time Regulations (WTR) a worker is entitled to up to four weeks paid annual leave, even if they are on long-term sick leave.

LEGAL REMEDY

A claim for compensation under the WTR may be brought in the employment tribunal within three months of the date of the failure to pay or grant annual leave.

RETIREMENT DUE TO ILL HEALTH

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

The duty to adjust contained in the DDA may require the employer to facilitate access to an ill health retirement pension or permanent ill health insurance.

LEGAL REMEDY

A claim for this entitlement must be lodged in the employment tribunal within three months of the date of the failure or refusal to grant it.

BREACH OF CONTRACT

An employer may be under a duty from an implied term of trust and confidence to let a worker know of their rights to access an ill health retirement pension or health insurance. It may also be in breach of contract to terminate a contract in a way which automatically brings a permanent ill health insurance arrangement to an end.

LEGAL REMEDY

A claim for breach of contract can only be taken if the contract has ended and must be brought in the employment tribunal within three months of the termination. There is a limit on claims of £25,000 for breach of contract taken in an employment tribunal, but no such limit in the High Court.

Claims can also be taken within the County Court or High Court in England and Wales within six years (five years in Scotland in the Sheriff Court or Court of Session).

CONCLUSION

Legal remedies do not put an end to stress at work. Courts and tribunals can only rule on individual cases and any court case will involve the individual in a harrowing and inevitably stressful experience.

As a Union we need to consider what other tools there may be to stop stressful situations. Trade unions representatives need to view work-related stress in the overall industrial context of improving working conditions and rights for their members.

WHAT NEXT?

If you believe a stressful situation is developing at work, contact a representative, Health & safety Officer or full-time official. Remember prevention is the best option.

Amicus Work Related Stress MOT



This survey was prepared in collaboration with the TUC for European Week for Health and Safety 2002, which fell in the week beginning Monday 14th October.

Instructions for use

An MOT for your car comes in two parts: a vehicle survey and a test for the amount of environmentally damaging emissions it produces. The *Amicus Stress MOT* follows the same principles: a survey of the workplace to find out what is creating stress for the workers, and a test of how well the organisation addresses the workers' problems it produces.

First use the People survey

The *Organisation survey* is only really appropriate if there is a problem with stress in your workplace, so you need to do the *People survey* first. That will tell you if you have a problem - if there's no evidence of such a problem, then the *Organisation survey* isn't really worth doing.

Getting it filled in

Fill in the name of the part of your workplace which you are studying (at the start of the form), the date by which it should be returned and who to return it to (both at the end of the form) and then run off enough copies to give to everyone in the part of the workplace being surveyed.

Distribute copies to workers in whichever part of your workplace you want to study. Remember to give the survey to as many people as possible, including agency and temporary workers. Remind them about the deadline for returning the form, and who to return it to.

People may want to give the information completely anonymously so you may need to arrange a post box or similar system where members can drop off their survey sheets. When the answers have come back, check what percentage of forms have been returned. A return rate of over 50% is very good, and should give you confidence in the results - the lower the rate of return, the less you can depend on the findings of the survey (and if hardly anyone returns the form, that may just mean there's not a big problem).

Make a workplace stress map

Draw a sketch of your workplace (it doesn't have to be to scale, or a work of art!) Write in each area surveyed the percentage of workers answering 'yes' to question 2.

Identify the main stressors

Count up the number of '5s' circled for each stressor. If more than a quarter of the people who responded have circled '5' for any stressor, that issue is a major problem which needs to be addressed.

For each part of the workplace where there are high levels of stress, work out what the main stressors are by listing the number of '5s' each stressor received. The more '5s', the more of a problem that stressor is. (It's your judgment what 'high' means - often it will just be compared with other parts of the workplace - you should start where the stress is worst!)

Ask for more!

Once you have developed the stress map, and found out what the main causes of stress are, put them on a poster on notice boards, or produce a short report of the survey findings (including how many people showed the health symptoms of stress) and give everyone a copy. Then set up a suggestion box for people to make their own suggestions about how their stress could be reduced - they might come up with ideas you haven't thought of, and their views may help you to persuade management.

What to do with the *Organisation survey*

Either on your own or with other safety reps, complete the *Organisation survey*. If the answer to a question is yes, write 'Pass' - if the answer is no, write 'Fail'. If you don't know the answer, leave it blank (but make every effort to find out). Because you need to find out some detailed information, you may not be able to complete the survey in one go.

If there are five or more questions left blank, the organisation may have failed or it may not, but the first priority should be to find out the answers to those questions - only then can you tell if you've got a problem (and you probably have!)

If the organisation has fewer than five 'Fails', and fewer than five left blank, that doesn't mean the organisation is healthy - but you will need to decide whether to focus on the areas where the organisation has not scored a 'Pass'.

Did your workplace 'pass' or 'fail' the MOT?

This system is not designed to decide whether your workplace is stress-free. All workplaces are likely to have some sort of problem with stress, and just because yours isn't a raging inferno of stress doesn't mean the problems need to be tackled. But purely as a guide:

- if more than a fifth of respondents exhibited one or more health symptoms (in the 'how are you?' section of the *People survey*); or
- if there are any stressors where more than a quarter of respondents circled the '5' (people who don't circle the '5' can be considered to have circled '1' for this calculation); or
- if there are five or more 'Fails' in the *Organisation survey*...

then your organisation has 'failed' the *Amicus Stress MOT* and needs action urgently - the next section sets out what to do next.

What if your workplace 'fails' the Amicus Stress MOT?

Write up a report for your fellow safety reps, union branch, safety committee or meeting with management, including the stress map.

Write up the *People survey* under each heading:

- say what percentage of people answered yes to Question 2, and how many people have the symptoms of stress, and
- under each heading of the what makes you stressed at work section, set out which stressors got the highest number of '5s'. These are the main problems which your managers need to address.

Write up the *Organisation survey* by separating out the issues where the organisation got a 'Pass' and a 'Fail', and list the questions you weren't able to answer. You may need to give some explanation of why you answered each question the way you did.

Then:

- present the report of the findings of the survey;
- draft an action plan (with a realistic timetable for implementation) on how you think excessive workplace stress should be tackled to present to your employer. Make sure areas that are suffering the highest levels of stress are high priority for action;
- ask for a working group to be set up to do this work. Make sure the group itself has a deadline for agreeing the action plan;
- press your employer to fulfil their duty to assess the main risks and make sure that you and other safety reps are consulted on the risk assessment process and action plan, and about its implementation and monitoring; and
- ask the employer to provide training for managers and employees on dealing with workplace stress and its victims.

Partnership

Amicus strongly believes in a partnership approach to tackling stress. You will need allies especially if an employer doesn't yet treat workplace stress as a serious issue. Setting up a joint working group to tackle workplace stress will help you to gain those allies. Partners for the joint working group could include the safety committee, safety managers, human resources and outside agencies working in health promotion.

Further help

Amicus can advise you further and provide materials to help you to take action on workplace stress. Give feedback on the outcome of the *Amicus Stress MOT* to the Working Environment Unit of Amicus and to tuc@worksafe.co.uk You can also let us know whether you can see any problems with the way the *Amicus Stress MOT* is set up, so that we can improve it.

For further information on matters relating to health and safety and the working environment, contact the Amicus Working Environment Unit, 40 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UD, 020 7939 7094, or see our home page <http://www.amicus-m.org/weu.shtml>. Alternatively if you have an urgent query or wish to report information that should be shared more widely, e-mail Chris Ball National Secretary Chris.Ball@amicus-m.org.



People survey

Work area:

Q1 Do you feel you are stressed by your work? YES/NO

Yes: Please proceed to the next question. No: thanks for taking part.

Q2 Is the level of stress unacceptable/causing you harm? YES/NO

Yes: please carry on to the next section. No: thanks for taking part.

Section A: how are you?

Do you generally suffer from these symptoms (or have you suffered from them a lot recently)?

- Frequent headaches YES/NO
- Depression YES/NO
- Anxiety attacks YES/NO
- Sleeplessness YES/NO
- Indigestion YES/NO
- Continual tiredness YES/NO

If you know these are nothing to do with work or the product solely of events outside work, answer “no” – but only if you are really sure – your work may be affecting you more than you know, and if your work is making these symptoms worse, please answer “yes”.

Section B: what makes you stressed at work?

Below are some known causes of work-related stress (the Health and Safety Executive calls them “stressors”). Please think about how much stress each one causes you. If a stressor causes you high levels of stress, circle the “5” – if it causes you low or no stress, circle the “1”, and if it causes you moderate or occasional stress, circle the “3” (the “2” and the “4” are to give you options between “high”, “medium” and “low”). If you don’t know or can’t answer, don’t circle any of them.

This survey only covers stressors at work. It’s not meant to include stress caused outside the workplace, although that can add to your work-related stress.

A. Demands of the job

- 1 2 3 4 5 A1. Long working hours
- 1 2 3 4 5 A2. Too much work
- 1 2 3 4 5 A3. Too little work
- 1 2 3 4 5 A4. Repetitive or monotonous work
- 1 2 3 4 5 A5. Insufficient time to do your job
- 1 2 3 4 5 A6. Not enough rest breaks

B. Lack of control

- 1 2 3 4 5 B1. Lack of control over work
- 1 2 3 4 5 B2. Work monitoring by computer or video
- 1 2 3 4 5 B3. Pace of the work dictated by machines
- 1 2 3 4 5 B4. Deadlines which are regularly too tight
- 1 2 3 4 5 B5. Unremitting pressure to perform well
- 1 2 3 4 5 B6. Over-harsh discipline
- 1 2 3 4 5 B7. Too much supervision
- 1 2 3 4 5 B8. Too little supervision
- 1 2 3 4 5 B9. Too little job/task specific training

C. Work-life balance

- 1 2 3 4 5 C1. Inflexible working hours (causing child care/domestic problems)
- 1 2 3 4 5 C2. Unsympathetic management
- 1 2 3 4 5 C3. Unfair pay system
- 1 2 3 4 5 C4. Failure to recognise achievements
- 1 2 3 4 5 C5. Skills not being fully utilised

D. Relationships at work

- 1 2 3 4 5 D1. Bullying
- 1 2 3 4 5 D2. Sexual, racial or other harassment
- 1 2 3 4 5 D3. Discrimination or prejudice from colleagues or managers
- 1 2 3 4 5 D4. Risk of violence and abuse from customers or service users

- 1 2 3 4 5 D5. Working alone
- 1 2 3 4 5 D6. Lack of communication between colleagues
- 1 2 3 4 5 D7. Lack of communication between staff and management

E. Change

- 1 2 3 4 5 E1. Uncertainty about your future
- 1 2 3 4 5 E2. Lack of job security
- 1 2 3 4 5 E3. Introduction of new management techniques
- 1 2 3 4 5 E4. Restructuring
- 1 2 3 4 5 E5. Lack of consultation over changes

F. Conflicting roles

- 1 2 3 4 5 F1. Unclear job responsibilities
- 1 2 3 4 5 F2. Conflicting responsibilities
- 1 2 3 4 5 F3. Confused demands

G. Working environment

- 1 2 3 4 5 G1. Heat or cold in the workplace
- 1 2 3 4 5 G2. Poor lighting or lack of natural light
- 1 2 3 4 5 G3. Untidy or unclean working areas
- 1 2 3 4 5 G4. Overcrowding or cramped work areas
- 1 2 3 4 5 G5. Excessive noise, fumes or dust
- 1 2 3 4 5 G6. Poor eating and rest facilities
- 1 2 3 4 5 G7. Badly designed, unsuitable or uncomfortable equipment

Please complete this survey and return it by
to:

All information is anonymous and will be used to help identify workplace stressors so that your union in partnership with management can produce an action plan to reduce workplace stress levels.



Organisation survey

Write 'Pass' against questions where you are able to answer "yes" and 'Fail' against questions where the answer is "no". Where you do not know the answer (do try hard to find out!) leave the question blank.

1. Does your employer collect details of stress-related sickness absence? **YES/NO**
2. Is the overall sickness absence rate in the organisation below the national average of 9.3 days a year per employee? **YES/NO**
3. If someone took sick leave for stress-related reasons, would your employer attempt to identify whether the stress was work-related? **YES/NO**
4. Does your employer have a policy for dealing with workplace stress? **YES/NO**
5. Does your employer's policy on workplace stress cover health and safety, equality and human resources issues? **YES/NO**
6. Were safety reps or the union consulted in the development of your organisation's stress policy? **YES/NO**
7. Are audits or risk assessments carried out for workplace stress? **YES/NO**
8. Are safety reps involved in stress risk assessments? **YES/NO**
9. Does your employer have/provide copies of HSE guidance on preventing work-related stress? **YES/NO**
10. Are managers given training on managing workplace stress? **YES/NO**
11. Are staff given information on workplace stress? **YES/NO**
12. Are staff generally confident that they can report suffering from stress, or give stress as the reason for sickness absence, without fear of discipline? **YES/NO**
13. Do/would managers act in a sympathetic way to people suffering from workplace stress? **YES/NO**
14. Are confidential counselling or similar services available for workers suffering from workplace stress? **YES/NO**
15. Would your employer be prepared to alter working conditions or practices (such as hours, workload or specific tasks) to help someone suffering from stress? **YES/NO**