

Stress

1. The Purpose

The Forestry Commission (FC) is committed to the health, safety and welfare of all its employees and this policy acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress.

2. The Principles

The principles of the policy are to:

- Comply with the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) guidance relating to stress management;
- Carry out risk assessments to identify and control or eliminate workplace stressors;
- Promote the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors; and
- Provide appropriate training in stress awareness for managers and staff.

3. The Policy

Stress is defined by the HSE as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them'. It makes an important distinction between pressure and stress.

- **Pressure** can be positive, acting as a motivator that enables people to meet deadlines or rise to a challenge.
- **Stress** is a product of excessive pressure and may be detrimental to health

The FC is committed to identifying, managing and controlling the causes of work related stress by: providing HR policies and procedures that are used to manage all staff; carrying out risk assessments, in particular when there are significant organisational or procedural changes; using the staff survey as a tool to measure levels of stress; providing stress awareness training; and managing the demands placed on staff to make sure that they do not outweigh their ability to cope.

3.1 Your responsibilities as an employee

You are expected to:

- Raise issues or concerns about stress with your line manager, or other manager, at the earliest opportunity;
- Participate in the performance management (PMS) process and take advantage of training and/or development opportunities;
- Talk to your line manager if you feel unable to deliver the duties of your post, or any additional duties, within normal working hours;
- Take appropriate breaks during the working day and take your annual leave entitlement;
- Attend stress awareness training when it is available; and
- Accept opportunities for counselling or occupational health referral when recommended.

3.2 Your responsibilities as a manager

You are expected to:

- Carry out performance management reviews and make sure that staff are fully trained to carry out their duties;
- Examine workloads to make sure they are reasonable, making adjustments where necessary;
- Monitor working hours, the accrual of 'time of in lieu' (TOIL) and overtime to make sure that staff are working efficiently and effectively, without feeling under pressure to work excessive hours;
- Monitor holidays to make sure that staff are able to take their full annual leave entitlement;
- Report and manage all sickness absences in line with the FC's procedures alerting HR Case Managers immediately if staff are absent due to workplace stress;
- Manage workloads when there are absences (sickness or annual leave) to ensure that other staff are not overloaded;
- Carry out risk assessments, where appropriate, making sure that any recommendations are implemented and reviewed;
- Make sure there is good communication with your staff, particularly when there are organisational or procedural changes;
- Attend stress awareness training when it is available promoting and supporting the training making sure that your staff also attend; and
- Support staff experiencing stress making sure they understand the help available from the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

3.3 Human Resources responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- Giving advice and guidance on the application of HR policies and procedures;
- Advising managers and staff on training and development requirements and how these might be met;
- Assisting in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating and reporting sickness absence figures;
- Providing support to staff absent due to workplace stress by making sure they can access the EAP, recommending an occupational health referral (where appropriate) and working with their line manager on a planned return to work;
- Organising training and support for managers in implementing and reviewing stress risk assessments; and
- Consulting the Forestry Commission Trade Unions (FCTU) on initiatives to identify, manage and control the causes of work related stress.