

Title	Stress prevention at work checkpoints-Practical improvements for stress prevention in the workplace
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Brief Introduction	<p>Foreword</p> <p>Work-related stress is one of the most important issues in many countries and in different kinds of workplaces. Stress has many negative impacts, including circulatory and gastrointestinal diseases, other physical problems, psychosomatic and psychosocial problems, and low productivity. Increasing emphasis is being placed on improving working conditions and work organization with respect to stress at work, and on practical measures to cope with stressful work situations. Recent surveys by the ILO indicate that there are commonly applicable checkpoints for studying and reducing stress at work. It is useful to review recent international experience in this regard and develop easy-to-apply checkpoints applicable in varying situations.</p> <p>It is especially important to optimize workplace conditions and work organization to prevent stress-related problems in the workplace. There are a number of practical countermeasures to such problems, which include optimizing the outer loads (stressors) at work, at home and in the community; increasing the coping ability of workers; and reinforcing support systems for workers.</p> <p>This manual therefore aims at reviewing workplace stress issues. It includes easy-to-apply checkpoints for identifying stressors in working life and mitigating their harmful effects. It is hoped that workers and employers will be able to use the checkpoints to detect causes of stress at work and take effective measures to address them.</p> <p>It is critical to the success of any programme on workplace stress control that the process of preventing stress be linked to risk assessment. The checkpoints in this publication represent good practice for organizations in general, but they must be linked to the specifics of the organization and to particular problems. It is important that stress not be treated differently from other risks; the employer must undertake a risk assessment from which any changes must proceed. A workplace stress prevention policy should not be a separate document, and the issue should be integrated into the overall occupational safety and health policy of the enterprise.</p> <p>This publication is much more than a manual on stress; many of its illustrations are a guide to auditing good safety and health practices which, of course, will pay dividends in minimizing stress. The publication of this document is expected to complement ILO activities aimed at improving workplace conditions and preventing stress at work in many countries around the world.</p> <p>Experience and feedback on the application of the checkpoints listed here in different types of workplaces – manufacturing, information technology, agriculture and so forth – will be extremely useful for further improvement of this publication. It is our hope that the manual will be improved and revised in the future through its trial application in different countries and industries.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Seiji Machida Director Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork) International Labour Office</p>