

<b>TITLE: MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS</b>	
<b>Guideline Number: LS1467</b>	<b>Issue Date: 3 / October / 2007</b>
<b>Issue Status: 1.0</b>	

**PURPOSE:**

To provide guidelines on managing workplace stress.

*Workplace stress takes many forms and can have a number of potential causes. Operational personnel within an emergency service environment are also subject to stress as a result of critical incidents.*

**SCOPE:**

This Guideline applies to the following:

- All government authorities and agencies and those organisations responsible for the management and operation of coastal environments; and
- Those organisations experienced in public safety and responsible for the provision of public safety services.

For example:

- Coastal/marine park authorities and managers
- Lifesaving service providers
- Lifeguards and lifeguard supervisors

This Guideline applies to coastal environments, including ocean coastline and saltwater waterways that open to the oceans surrounding Australia.

**GUIDELINE DESCRIPTION:**

**1.0 Causes of stress**

1.1 Lifeguards and their supervisors should be aware of the factors that cause stress.

1.2 A number of factors can, either by themselves or in combination, contribute to stress in the working environment, including:

- a. Pressures related to heavy workload, or excessively long hours
- b. Anxiety related to change
- c. Stress relating to conflict
- d. Stress relating to critical incidents, such as emergencies
- e. Stress relating to confusion of roles and responsibilities
- f. Stress related to unsuccessful resuscitation
- g. Stress related to disciplinary action
- h. Pressures related to high-risk work
- i. Concerns about health and/or safety

**2.0 Identification of stress factors**

2.1 Factors that may assist in the identification of stress factors include, but are not limited to:

- a. Accident, incident and disease records
- b. Trends in workers compensation claims
- c. Absenteeism

- d. Behaviour of an individual which may indicate stress (e.g. anger, depression, uncharacteristically careless work or change of attitude)

2.2 In addition to workplace/operational factors, personal factors unrelated to the workplace or operational environment should also be taken into consideration.

### 3.0 **Control measures**

3.1 Control measures to minimise causes of stress may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Awareness training for individuals that may be exposed to stress-causing situations
- b. Effective communication within the workplace and within work teams
- c. Clear definition of roles and responsibilities
- d. Specific training for identified individuals in a 'peer support' role
- e. Addressing specific causes identified

3.2 In the event of a traumatic event (critical incident), a debriefing session should be arranged as soon as practicable (usually within 24 hours) for all personnel involved with the event. Where possible, the need for specialist assistance should be identified in a timely manner.

### 4.0 **Specialist assistance**

Where required, specialist assistance may need to be provided to assist with counselling services to personnel involved in traumatic events (critical incidents).

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Lifeguard** means 'an appropriately trained and qualified individual who volunteers or is employed at bathing beaches, pools, etc. to prevent drowning, provide injury prevention and response services, and to save people from drowning'.

**Lifesaving service** means 'an organised and structured service comprised of lifeguards and appropriate rescue and first aid equipment supported by a coordinated backup team'.

**Occupational health and safety (OHS)** means 'the health and safety considerations of or relating to the activity or business for which one is trained'.

**Workplace stress** means 'the negative impact (psychological or physiological) on individuals, caused by excessive pressures or critical incidents within the workplace/operational environment'.

#### **REFERENCES:**

Australian Coastal Public Safety Guidelines

- LS1460: Occupational health and safety policy
- LS1461: Lifeguard occupational health and safety
- LS1462: Zero tolerance on alcohol and drugs
- LS1463: Sun safe practices
- LS1464: Selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- LS1465: Hazards and banning of smoking
- LS1466: Manual handling safety
- LS1468: Rehabilitation from illness or injury

Guidelines for safe recreational water environments. Volume 1 – Coastal and fresh waters. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2003.

Lifeguard Service Operating Procedures Version 1, Surf Life Saving Queensland, February 2005.

Surf Life Saving Australia, 2003. Surf lifesaving training manual, 32nd edition. Elsevier Australia Pty Ltd.

**APPENDICES:**

Nil