



Psychosocial Hazard Quick Guide

POOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

If individuals are **required to work in environments where they are exposed to unpleasant or hazardous experiences** (e.g. *low air quality or chemical hazards*) **this can represent poor work environmental conditions**. Poor environmental conditions can create increased risk to individual health and safety, and this can lead to psychological or physical injury if this experience is **severe, prolonged or frequent**.

A quick guide to managing the risk of poor environmental conditions is summarised below, to help you understand how to spot and address these in your workplace.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Look out for signs of poor environmental conditions in your workplace across these key factors:

THE ENVIRONMENT



- Excessive workplace noise or unpleasant odours
- Exposure to biological or chemical hazards without adequate protection (e.g. *PPE*)
- Working in low, overbright or flickering lighting
- Working in extremely hot or cold environments
- Poor air or water conditions (e.g. *low ventilation*)
- The work environment creates distraction or fatigue (e.g. *overcrowded workstations*)

WORK ACTIVITIES



- Team members are required to undertake hazardous tasks
- Demanding work is undertaken using uncomfortable or restrictive equipment
- Work is undertaken with or near poorly maintained machinery
- Long hours are worked without adequate time or facilities to rest



POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF POOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

If poor environmental conditions are severe and/or occur frequently over time, it can increase the risk of:



Health problems as poor working conditions increase the risk of injury



Decreased team morale or job satisfaction due to working in unpleasant and/or dangerous conditions

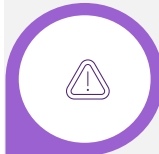


Reduced efficiency if poor work conditions disrupt workflows or create distraction



Damage to organisational reputation or team member trust

When considering the level of risk for this hazard in your team or workplace, remember to ask yourself:

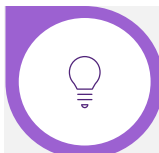


1. How **LONG** have issues been occurring?
2. How **OFTEN** are they occurring?
3. How much do these issues **IMPACT** your team members?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Some actions you could take as a leader to help improve environmental conditions:

- ▶ When poor conditions arise, look to eliminate these wherever possible (e.g. *report maintenance and facility issues*)
- ▶ Make sure that working equipment is clean, up to date and regularly maintained (e.g. *updating software*)
- ▶ Isolate unsafe or hazardous substances or equipment from the main working environment (e.g. *store equipment not in use to reduce the risk of tripping over them or their electrical cords*)
- ▶ Encourage hazard reporting in UQSafe
- ▶ Promote ergonomic facilities for your team members (e.g. *workstation set-up*)
- ▶ Make sure your team members understand their obligations to support workplace cleanliness and safety
- ▶ Maintain and communicate hazard response/reduction plans with your team, and update these as working conditions change



GOOD PRACTICE

Managing environmental conditions effectively is a continuous process and you should review your knowledge and the effectiveness of your actions regularly.

Keep these tips in mind:



Keep all equipment up to date and well maintained, including things not directly involved in day-to-day work (e.g., *air conditioner or office dishwasher*)



Monitor environmental conditions to ensure not interacting with other psychosocial hazards to increase the level of risk



Where possible, provide a separate environment for breaks and work to reduce exposure to food or waste odours in working areas



Ask team members to support in monitoring workplace conditions, and invite their input when making decisions about the work environment