



Psychosocial Hazard Quick Guide

TRAUMATIC EVENTS AND MATERIALS

If team members are exposed to incidents or materials that **severely impact their mental or emotional well-being, this can represent a traumatic event for them**. Traumatic events encompass a wide range of distressing situations, from witnessing or being involved in accidents, violence or natural disasters to being exposed to disturbing materials like graphic images, videos, or content related to violence or abuse. Experiences of traumatic events can lead to psychological injury if experiences are **severe, prolonged or frequent**.

A quick guide to managing the risk of traumatic events is summarised below, to help you understand how to spot and address this in your teams.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Example signs of exposure to traumatic events and materials include (but are not limited to):

DIRECT EXPOSURE

- Team members work in environments where risk of injury is heightened (e.g. *remote / isolated work sites*)
- Team members are required to respond to emergency situations (e.g. *security threats*)
- Team members have been exposed to or witnessed distressing events at work (e.g. *fatality, car accident*)
- Team members experience or witness bullying, harassment, aggression or violence

OTHER FORMS OF EXPOSURE

- Care or services are provided to those exposed to traumatic events (e.g. *domestic abuse survivors*)
- Team members are required to listen to, read about or watch traumatic material (e.g. *victim/survivor testimonies*)
- Team members are exposed to things that trigger extreme fear or traumatic memories



POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS

If experiences of and/or exposure to traumatic events are severe and/or occur frequently over time, it can increase the risk of:



Emotional distress and/or psychological trauma (e.g. *depression, feelings of guilt or anger*)



Increased physical wellbeing concerns from emotional toll / stress (e.g. *headaches*)

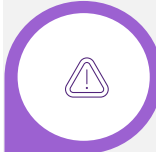


Strain to workplace and personal relationships (e.g. *due to social withdrawal*)



Greater absenteeism and turnover (e.g. *requiring time off work to recover*)

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

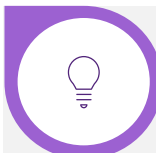
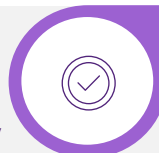


1. How **LONG** have issues been occurring?
2. How **OFTEN** are they occurring?
3. How much do these issues **IMPACT** your team members?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Some actions you could take as a leader to help prevent and address traumatic events:

- ▶ **Communicate a clear 'zero tolerance' policy** toward bullying, harassment violence and aggression within your team
- ▶ **Educate yourself** regarding your workplace's emergency response policies and procedures, making sure your team access and review these too
- ▶ **Modify services where possible** to reduce the risk of exposure to high-risk situations (e.g., *reducing instances of off-site work*)
- ▶ **Ensure additional supports are provided** where team members are at higher risk of exposure to traumatic events (e.g. *additional breaks or debriefing*)
- ▶ **Protect access** to potentially distressing or traumatic material (e.g. *password protection or document flagging*)
- ▶ **Regularly promote access to mental health resources**, such as employee assistance programs to support employees before, during, and after traumatic events



GOOD PRACTICE

Managing the risk of traumatic events is a continuous process and you should review your knowledge and the effectiveness of your actions regularly.

Keep these tips in mind:



Get ahead of the risk: Are there areas of potential risk in your team that you can address before issues escalate? (e.g. *high-risk off-site work*)



Be a trauma-informed leader: Explore opportunities to learn about how to manage and respond to trauma if it occurs in your team



Remain vigilant of potential risks for and responses to trauma in your team. Try to catch issues and commence support as soon as possible



Look after yourself. Leading others through traumatic events can be complex and distressing. Prioritise your wellbeing and seek support