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## Chapter 13

# Safety and Health at Work

### Training for Safety

As the HR manager of a large construction company, your workers' health and safety is of paramount concern. Last week, you reported an incidence rate of 7.5 accidents per 100 employees to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). When you compared these numbers to last year, you found the number had significantly increased, as it was 4.2. This is concerning, because you know an unsafe workplace is not only bad for employees and bad for business, but it could result in fines from OSHA. You ask your operations managers to meet with you about the situation. When you bring this to his attention, he doesn't seem at all concerned about the almost double increase in accidents over the last year. He says the increase in accidents is a result of scaffolding falling during a building project where several workers were hurt. He says this one accident skewed the numbers. He mentions that the supervisor responsible for the scaffolding had been let go six months ago for other reasons, and he assures you that there is no reason to be concerned. A few weeks after this conversation, two of your workers spend time in the hospital because of a falling scaffolding injury. Again, you approach the operations manager and he assures you that those employees were just new and he will implement proper procedures. You know the incident will result in another high incident percentage, even if there isn't another accident the rest of the year. You consider your options.

You look back over ten years of accident reports and find there are three areas for which your company seems to have 90 percent of all accidents. You decide you will develop a training program to address these safety issues in your workplace. You refer to your HRM textbook for tips on how to prepare and communicate this training to your employees. When you present this option to your operations manager, he says that employees don't have the time to take from their jobs to go through this training and suggests you just let it go. You are prepared for this response, and you give him the dollar figure of money lost owing to worker injury in your organization. This gets his attention, especially when you compare it to the small cost of doing a two-hour training for all employees. Both of you check your Outlook schedules to find the best day of the week to schedule the training, for minimum impact on employees' work.

## **Workplace Safety and Health Introduction**

[\(click to see video\)](#)

*The author introduces the chapter on workplace safety and health.*

## 13.1 Workplace Safety and Health Laws

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Be able to explain OSHA laws.
2. Understand right-to-know laws.

Workplace safety is the responsibility of everyone in the organization. HR professionals and managers, however, play a large role in developing standards, making sure safety and health laws are followed, and tracking workplace accidents. Section 13.1.1 "Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Laws" addresses workplace laws as they relate to safety.

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Laws

In 2009 (the most recent data available at the time of this writing), 4,340 fatalities and 3.3 million injuries were reported. "Workplace Injuries and Illnesses: 2009," Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, news release, October 21, 2010, accessed April 14, 2011, [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/osh\\_10212010.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/osh_10212010.pdf). This staggering number represents not only the cost to employees' well-being but also financial and time costs to the company. This is why health and safety is a key component of any human resource management (HRM) strategic plan.

### What Is OSHA About?

[\(click to see video\)](#)

*A short video on the purpose of OSHA.*

The **Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA)**<sup>1</sup>, passed in 1970, created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which oversees health and safety in the workplace. The organization's mission is to ensure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education, and assistance. For example, OSHA offers ten- and thirty-hour courses on workplace hazards and also provides assistance to ensure companies are in compliance with standards. OSHA is part of the US Department of Labor, with the main administrator being the assistant secretary of

1. Passed in 1970, this act created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which oversees health and safety in the workplace.

labor for occupational safety and health. This person reports to the labor secretary, who is a member of the president's cabinet.

Although OSHA applies to all companies, health and safety standards are specifically mentioned for the following types of businesses:

1. Construction
2. Shipyard
3. Marine terminals

Although OSHA standards may appear to apply only to companies in production, manufacturing, or construction, even companies with primarily an office function are required to abide by the laws set by OSHA. Examples (not at all an exhaustive list) of the types of safety laws (for all types of businesses) that are overseen by OSHA are as follows:

1. **Regulations on walking/working surfaces.** According to OSHA, slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents and 15 percent of all accidental deaths. The standards apply to all permanent places of employment. The provision says that "all passageways, storerooms, and service rooms shall be kept clean and orderly. Every floor and working space shall be kept free of protruding nails, splinters, holes, or loose boards." These are a few examples included in this provision.
2. **Means of egress (exiting), which includes emergency evacuation plans.** "Every building or structure shall be arranged and maintained as to provide free and unobstructed egress from all part of the buildings. No lock or fastening to prevent free escape from inside the building should be installed (except in penal or corrective institutions)." The provision also says that exits shall be marked by a visible sign.
3. **Occupational noise exposure.** "Protection against the effects of noise exposure shall be provided when the sound levels reach a specified level. Controls should be used to control the sound, and protective equipment should be provided."
4. **Hazardous handling of materials.** OSHA regulates exposure to four hundred substances and requires communication about the possible chemical hazards to employees.
5. **Protective equipment, such as eye, face, and respiratory protection.** OSHA requires the use of personal protective equipment to reduce employee exposure to hazards. For example, head protection is required when workers are in an area where there is potential for

falling, and eye and face protection is required when workers are exposed to eye or face hazards such as flying particles and molten metal.

6. **Sanitation.** Some examples of these OSHA requirements include the following: Potable water should be provided in all places of employment. Vermin control is required in all enclosed workplaces. Toilet facilities must be provided, separate for each sex. The number of toilets provided depends on the number of employees.
7. **Requirement of first aid supplies on-site.** First aid kits are mandatory and should include gauze pads, bandages, gauze roller bandages, and other required items.
8. **Standards for fire equipment.** Fire extinguishers are required to be on-site for use by employees, unless there is a written fire policy that requires the immediate and total evacuation of employees.
9. **Standards for machine guards and other power tools.** Moving machine parts require safeguards (depending upon the industry) to prevent crushed fingers, hands, amputations, burns, or blindness. Safeguards might include a guard attached to the machine.
10. **Electrical requirements and standards.** OSHA electrical standards are designed to protect employees from electric shock, fires, and explosions. Electrical protective devices are required to cover wiring. OSHA also addresses the installation of electrical wiring.
11. **Commercial diving operation requirements.** OSHA provides information on the safety aspects of commercial diving such as pre- and postdive procedures, mixed-gas diving, and necessary qualifications of the dive team.

HR professionals and managers should have a good understanding of these laws and make sure, no matter which industry, that all these standards are followed in the workplace. These standards are normally part of the overall strategic HRM plan of any organization and are even more crucial to organizations involved in manufacturing.

There exist many examples of OSHA violations. For example, in a Queensbury, Pennsylvania, Dick's Sporting Goods store, OSHA found six violations, including blocked access to a fire extinguisher and workers' entering a trash compactor with the power supply on. Dick's was fined \$57,300 by OSHA and told it had fifteen days to comply or contest the findings. Chris Churchill, "OSHA Finds Violations at Queensbury Retailer," *Union Times*, August 8, 2011, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://www.timesunion.com/business/article/OSHA-finds-violations-at-Queensbury-retailer-1779404.php>.

## The Most Frequently Violated and Cited OSHA Standards

1. 1926.451—Scaffolding
2. 1926.501—Fall Protection
3. 1910.1200—Hazard Communication
4. 1910.134—Respiratory Protection
5. 1926.1053—Ladders
6. 1910.147—Lockout/Tagout
7. 1910.305—Electrical, Wiring Methods
8. 1910.178—Powered Industrial Trucks
9. 1910.303—Electrical, General Requirements
10. 1910.212—Machine Guarding

## Right-to-Know Laws

The **Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA)**<sup>2</sup> or more simply, right-to-know laws, were established by Congress in 1986. The purpose of this act was to require local and state governments to provide emergency response plans to respond to a chemical emergency. “Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA),” United States Environmental Protection Agency, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.epa.gov/epahome/r2k.htm>. The other requirement is that these plans must be reviewed on an annual basis. Companies that handle **extremely hazardous substances (EHSs)**<sup>3</sup> in large quantities must develop response plans as well. In addition, any organization that manufactures, processes, or stores certain hazardous chemicals must make available to local fire departments and state and local officials **material data safety sheets**<sup>4</sup>. The material data safety sheet should also be provided to employees, as the data lists not only the chemical components but health risks of the substance, how to handle the material safely, and how to administer first aid in the case of an accident. This requirement also states that inventories of all on-site chemicals must be reported to local and state governments, but the data sheets must also be made public, too.

This law and how it will be reported should be facilitated by the HR professional. Although the HRM may not know the chemical makeup of the materials used, he or she is responsible for facilitating the process to ensure that reporting is done timely and accurately. For organizations that use EHSs often, it is worthwhile to include the reporting process within the orientation training and provide ongoing training as the law changes. The A-Treat Bottling facility in Allentown, Pennsylvania, was cited by OSHA for repeat violations of lacking material safety data sheets for the chemicals it uses in manufacturing, among other infractions such as blocked exits

2. Also called right-to-know laws, established by Congress in 1986. The law requires hazardous chemical reporting to state and local agencies, as well as information on the chemicals used in a particular facility.

3. A list of toxic chemicals outlined in the EPCRA and specific rules for handling them.

4. Information made available that describes to the local fire departments and state and local officials the types of chemicals manufactured, used, or stored. Also includes information on how to properly handle the materials and how to administer first aid in case of an accident.

and forklift violations. The fines totaled \$110,880, and the company had fifteen days to comply or contest the allegations. "OSHA Cites Allentown Soft Drink Company," NewsWire.com, August 4, 2011, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://www.mmdnewswire.com/us-labor-departmen-57793.html>.

It is also important to note that some state standards are different from federal standards, which means the HR professional will need to be aware of the laws in the individual state in which the company is operating.

### Human Resource Recall

How do you think the OSHA requirements apply to office work settings?

### OSHA Enforcement

The record-keeping aspect of OSHA is perhaps as important as following the laws. Companies having fewer than ten employees in some industries are not required to keep records. The purpose of the record keeping does not imply that the employee or the company is at fault for an illness or injury. In addition, just because a record is kept doesn't mean the employee will be eligible for workers' compensation. The record-keeping aspect normally refers to the keeping of incidence rates, or the number of illnesses or injuries per one hundred full-time employees per year, as calculated by the following formula:

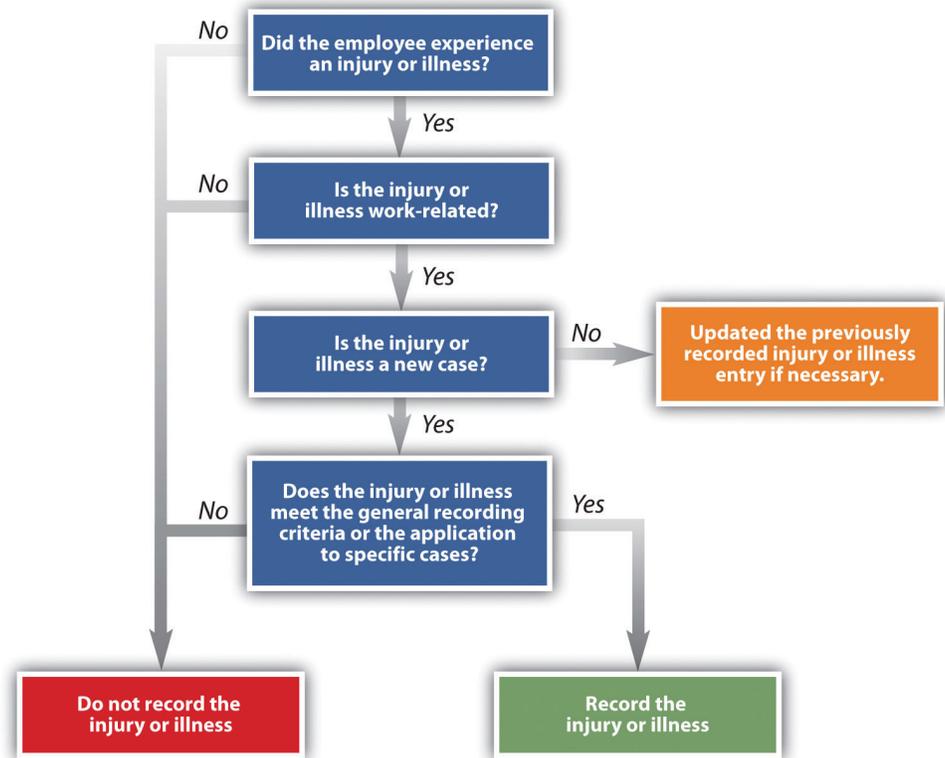
$$\text{incidence rate} = \frac{\text{number of injuries and illness} \times 200,000}{\text{total hours worked by all employees in the period}}$$

Two hundred thousand is the standard figure used, as it represents one hundred full-time employees who work forty hours per week for fifty weeks per year. An HR professional can then use this data and compare it to other companies in the same industry to see how its business is meeting safety standards compared with other businesses. This calculation provides comparable information, no matter the size of the company. If the incidence rate is higher than the average, the HR professional might consider developing training surrounding safety in the workplace.

Knowing what should be reported and what shouldn't be reported is an important component to OSHA. Figure 13.1 "The OSHA Decision Tree for Determining If an Injury or Illness Should Be Recorded" provides a decision tree that explains this.

Data are reported using a form called OSHA 300, which is shown in [Figure 13.2 "OSHA Reporting Form 300"](#).

Figure 13.1 The OSHA Decision Tree for Determining If an Injury or Illness Should Be Recorded



Source: <http://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/ppt1/RK1flowchart.html> (accessed September 2, 2011).

Figure 13.2 OSHA Reporting Form 300

The image displays two OSHA forms. The top form is OSHA's Form 300, titled 'Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses'. It is a detailed table with columns for identifying the person, describing the case, and classifying the case. The bottom form is OSHA's Form 300A, titled 'Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses'. It contains summary tables for 'Number of Cases', 'Number of Days', and 'Injury and Illness Types', along with an 'Establishment Information' section.

Source: <http://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/new-osh300form1-1-04.pdf> (accessed September 2, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, OSHA is responsible for enforcing standards. Besides requiring reporting, OSHA also performs inspections. OSHA is responsible for 7 million worksites across the country and so, of course, has to prioritize which ones it visits. OSHA has five main priorities for inspecting sites. First, it will inspect imminent danger situations. These are serious dangers that could cause death or serious harm. The second priority is for those sites where three or more employees were harmed, suffered illness, or were killed. These events are classified as fatalities or catastrophes and must be reported within an eight-hour time frame. The next priority is responding to complaints, which employees are allowed to file anonymously. Organizations that have had previous violations are prioritized next, and finally, planned programs. A planned program might be an organization that has had safety problems in the past and is working with OSHA to remedy the problem.

Most site visits are unannounced and begin with the inspector introducing himself or herself. Prior to this, the inspector has performed research on the organization

to be inspected. Once this occurs, a representative of the organization is assigned to accompany the inspector and the inspector discusses the reasons for the site visit. The HR professional is normally responsible for this task.

The inspector then walks around, pointing out any obvious violations, and then the inspector and representative discuss the findings. Within six months a complete report is sent, along with any citations or fines based on what the inspector found. If the organization is in disagreement with the violation or citation, a follow-up meeting with the OSHA director is scheduled and some fines may be reduced if the organization can show how it has improved and met the standards since the original visit.

OSHA has several penalties (per violation) it can assess on organizations, ranging from \$7,000 to \$70,000. The higher penalties often are a result of very serious offenses, in which an employee could have been killed, but also are imposed for willful offenses that the employer was aware could cause serious injury or death and did nothing about them. This is considered blatant indifference to the law. For example, Northeastern Wisconsin Wood Products was issued \$378,620 in fines for willful violations in the summer of 2011. The violations stemmed from repeat visits and citations to the facility, where no safety changes had been made. Some of the willful violations included lack of guards on dangerous machine belts and band saw blades and open-sided floors without a guardrail to prevent falls. Michael Connors, OSHA's regional administrator in Chicago, said, "Northeastern Wisconsin Wood Products has a history of failing to comply with OSHA standards. The company has yet to abate many violations cited in previous inspections and are unduly placing their workers at risk." "\$378,620 in Fines Issued for Willful Violations," *Occupational Health and Safety*, July 31, 2011, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://ohsonline.com/articles/2011/07/31/378620-in-fines-issued-to-wisconsin-wood-firm-for-willful-violations.aspx?admgarea=news>. While any violation of OSHA is serious, a willful violation is more serious, and the fines associated with it represent this.

### ***Fortune 500 Focus***

PepsiCo is the world's largest manufacturer, seller, and distributor of Pepsi-Cola products and generates \$119 billion in sales every year. "PepsiCo Annual Report," accessed September 15, 2011, [http://www.pepsico.com/Download/PepsiCo Annual Report 2010 Full Annual Report.pdf](http://www.pepsico.com/Download/PepsiCo%20Annual%20Report%202010%20Full%20Annual%20Report.pdf). Tropicana juice is owned by Pepsi-Co. In October of 2005, a spark triggered an explosion at a Tropicana juice processing plant in Bradenton, Florida, causing burns to two-thirds of a worker's body. While the worker survived, he underwent multiple surgeries to treat his burns. In this case, OSHA concluded that the fire could have been prevented if Tropicana had followed basic safety requirements such as risk evaluation, given tools to workers that did not produce sparks, and monitored for a buildup of flammable vapors and ventilated the area. OSHA inspectors tallied up a dozen violations, including two serious ones. Vice president of operations Mike Haycock said the plant has an incidence rate that is far lower than others in the industry, and plants around the country have immediately addressed many of the problems and are constantly working to correct other problems. Just-drinks editorial team, "US: Tropicana in Safety Hazards Payout," just-drinks, April 18, 2006, accessed August 21, 2011, [http://www.just-drinks.com/news/tropicana-in-safety-hazards-payout\\_id86183.aspx](http://www.just-drinks.com/news/tropicana-in-safety-hazards-payout_id86183.aspx).

The irony is that although the Tropicana factory paid \$164,250 in fines to OSHA, the company was part of the VPP or Voluntary Protection Program, whose membership benefits include exemption from regular inspections. Even after the fire, in 2007, OSHA formally reapproved the plant as a "star site," the highest level in VPP, meaning the plant pledged to exceed OSHA standards. Chris Hamby, "Model Workforce Not Always Safe," Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, July 7, 2011, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://www.masscosh.org/node/721>. OSHA contends the VPP program isn't perfect but is still a useful model to all employers of what can be achieved. For admission into the VPP program, workplaces must show they have fewer accidents and missed work days than average for their industry. According to Robert Tuttle, president of the local Teamsters union representing Tropicana workers, accidents are more common when employees are shifted out of their normal responsibilities, which is more common as the weak economy has led to staff cuts. David Gulliver, "Employees Not Always Safe in Model Workplaces," Florida Center for Investigative Reporting, July 22, 2011, KitchenAid Mixer Review, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://kitchenaidmixerreview.com/2011/07/22/employees-not-always-safe-in-model-workplaces/>. Tropicana plants have

had more than eighty deaths since 2000, varying from preventable explosions to chemical releases to crane accidents. Chris Hamby, “Model Workplaces Not Always Safe,” *Iwatchnews*, July 7, 2011, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://www.iwatchnews.org/2011/07/07/5130/model-workplaces-not-always-so-safe>. PepsiCo and Tropicana have taken a hard stance on these types of accidents, as each of the plants now has a safety manager trained on OSHA standards to prevent accidents. In addition, strict operating procedures have been implemented to prevent future problems.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Every year, 4,340 fatalities and 3.3 million injuries occur in the workplace in the United States.
- The *Occupational Safety and Health Act* was passed in 1970, with the goal of providing a safe and healthy work environment for all US workers.
- The *Occupational Safety and Health Administration* is part of the US Department of Labor and was created as a result of the act in 1970.
- OSHA applies to some specific industries, such as construction, shipyards, and marine terminals. However, some of the OSHA regulations apply to all industries.
- Some states may also have safety requirements that may be more stringent than federal laws.
- Right-to-know laws refer to a *material data safety sheet*, which discusses the types of chemicals, proper handling and storage, and first aid in case of an accident. These data sheets should be made available to the general public and employees.
- Right-to-know laws also require specific reporting to local and state agencies on chemicals used in certain quantities for some industries.
- OSHA requires recording keeping for all workplace accidents or illness. Record keeping is usually the responsibility of HR, and reports are made via OSHA Form 300.
- OSHA can inspect any site without prior notification. Usually, OSHA will gather information, visit the site, and ask for a representative. The representative is normally the HR person. The site visit will be performed, followed by discussion with the company representative. Within six months of the visit, a report and any penalties will be communicated.

## EXERCISES

1. Research the Internet for recent OSHA violations and write two paragraphs describing one.
2. Research possible strategies to reduce OSHA violations and write a paragraph on at least two methods.

## 13.2 Health Hazards at Work

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Be able to explain health concerns that can affect employees at work.

While OSHA covers many areas relating to health and safety at work, a few other areas are also important to mention. Stress management, office-related injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, and no-fragrance areas are all contemporary issues surrounding employee health and safety. We will discuss these issues in this section.

### Stress

In its annual survey on stress in America, American Psychological Association, “Key Findings,” news release, n.d., accessed April 17, 2011, <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/key-findings.aspx>. the American Psychological Association found that money (76 percent), work (70 percent), and the economy (65 percent) remain the most oft-cited sources of stress for Americans. Job instability is on the rise as a source of stress: nearly half (49 percent) of adults reported that job instability was a source of stress in 2010 (compared to 44 percent in 2009). At the same time, fewer Americans are satisfied with the ways their employers help them balance work and nonwork demands (36 percent in 2010 compared to 42 percent in 2009). The implications of these findings are obviously important for HRM professionals.

Before we discuss what HR professionals can do, let’s discuss some basic information about stress. As it is currently used, the term *stress* was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand for change.” The American Institute of Stress, accessed September 15, 2011, <http://www.stress.org/topic-definition-stress.htm>. In other words, we can say that **stress**<sup>5</sup> is the reaction we have to a stressor. A **stressor**<sup>6</sup> is some activity, event, or other stimulus that causes either a positive or negative reaction in the body.

Despite what people may think, some stress is actually good. For example, receiving a promotion at work may cause stress, but this kind of stress is considered to be positive. Stress is very much a personal thing, and depending on individual personalities, people may have different opinions about what is a stressor and what is not. For example, a professor does not normally find public speaking to be a

5. The reaction we have to a stressor.

6. Some activity, event, or other stimulus that causes either a positive or a negative response in the body.

stressor, while someone who does not do it on a daily basis may be very stressed about having to speak in public.

## Stress Management

[\(click to see video\)](#)

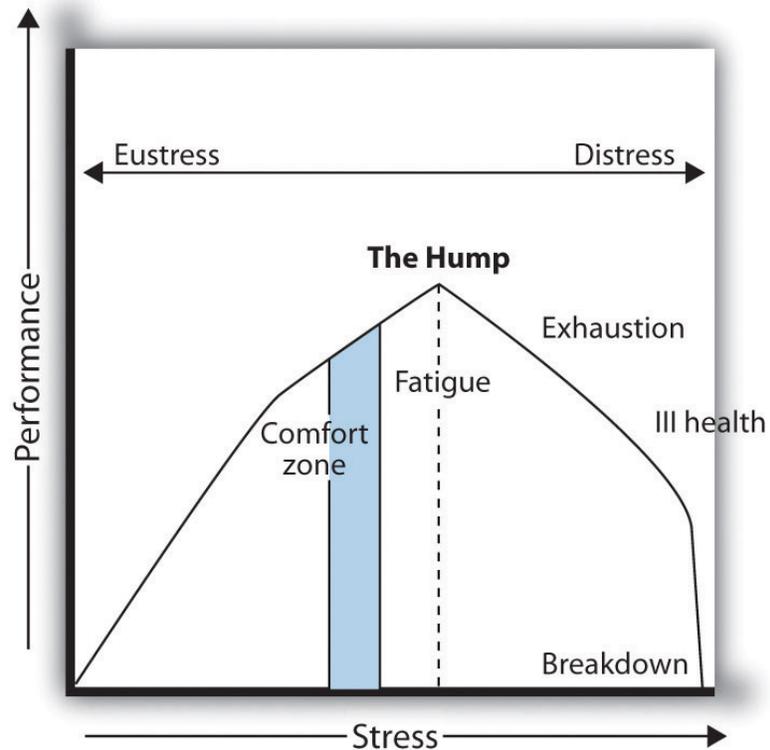
*While we all feel stressed sometimes, these funny videos show what not to do to manage stress.*

Selye recognized that not all stress is negative. Positive stress is called **eustress**<sup>7</sup>. This type of stress is healthy and gives a feeling of fulfillment and other positive feelings. Eustress can cause us to push ourselves harder to meet an end goal. On the other hand, **distress**<sup>8</sup> is the term used for negative stress. While eustress can push us, distress does not produce positive feelings and can go on for a long time without relief. We can further classify distress by **chronic stress**<sup>9</sup>, which is prolonged exposure to stress, and acute stress, which is short-term high stress. For example, someone who receives little or no positive result from stress and is continuously stressed may experience chronic stress. **Acute stress**<sup>10</sup> occurs in shorter bursts and may be experienced while someone is on a tight deadline for a project.

Two other terms related to stress are hyperstress and hypostress. **Hyperstress**<sup>11</sup> is a type of stress in which there are extremes with little or no relief for a long period of time. This type of stress often results in burnout. **Hypostress**<sup>12</sup> is the lack of eustress or distress in someone's life. Remember, some stress can be good and pushes us to work harder. We see this type of stress with people who may work in a factory or other type of repetitive job. The effect of this type of stress is usually feelings of restlessness.

7. A type of stress that is healthy and gives a feeling of fulfillment and other positive feelings.
8. The term used for negative stress.
9. Prolonged exposure to stress and acute stress, which is short-term high stress.
10. A type of stress that occurs in shorter bursts.
11. A type of stress in which there are extremes with little or no relief for a long period of time, normally resulting in burnout.
12. The lack of eustress or distress in someone's life.

Figure 13.3 *The Stress Curve*



Source: Adapted from P. Nixon, 1979.

One last important thing to note is how a person goes through the cycle of stress. Figure 13.3 "The Stress Curve" shows an example of how stress is good up to a point, but beyond that point, the person is fatigued and negatively affected by the stress. Bear in mind, this varies from person to person based on personality type and stress-coping mechanisms.

As you have already guessed, stress on the job creates productivity issues, which is why it concerns HR professionals. We know that stress can cause headaches, stomach issues, and other negative effects that can result in lost productivity but also result in less creative work. Stress can raise health insurance costs and cause employee turnover. Because of this, according to *HR Magazine*, Kathryn Tyler, "Stress Management," *HR Magazine*, September 1, 2006, accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.shrm.org/Publications/hrmagazine/EditorialContent/Pages/0906tyler.aspx>. many employers are taking the time to identify the chief workplace stressors in employees' lives. With this information, steps can be taken to reduce or eliminate such stress.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, for example, implemented several strategies to reduce stress in its workplace. The firm restructured its work teams so that rather than having one employee work with one client, teams of employees work with groups of clients. Rather than having an employee say, “I can’t go to my son’s baseball game because I need to wait for this client call,” this arrangement allows employees to cover for each other.

The organization also requires employees to take vacation time and even promotes it with posters throughout the office. In fact, even weekends are precious at PricewaterhouseCoopers. If an employee sends an e-mail on the weekend, a popup screen reminds her or him it is the weekend and it is time to disconnect.

## Being a Student Can Be Stressful

Here are the most common stressors for college students:

- Death of a loved one
- Relocating to a new city or state
- Divorce of parents
- Encounter with the legal system
- Transfer to a new school
- Marriage
- Lost job
- Elected to leadership position
- New romantic relationship
- Serious argument with close friend
- Increase in course load or difficulty of courses
- Change in health of family member
- First semester in college
- Failed important course
- Major personal injury or illness
- Change in living conditions
- Argument with instructor
- Outstanding achievement
- Change in social life
- Change in sleeping habits
- Lower grades than expected
- Breakup of relationship
- New job
- Financial problems
- Change in eating habits
- Chronic car trouble
- Pregnancy
- Too many missed classes
- Long commute to work/school
- Working more than one job
- Impending graduation
- Argument with family member
- Sexual concerns
- Changes in alcohol and/or drug use
- Roommate problems
- Raising children

Offering flextime is also a way to reduce employee stress. It allows employees to arrange their work and family schedule to one that reduces stress for them. This type of creative scheduling, according to Von Madsen, HR manager at ARUP Laboratories, Kathryn Tyler, “Stress Management,” *HR Magazine*, September 1, 2006, accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.shrm.org/Publications/hrmagazine/EditorialContent/Pages/0906tyler.aspx>. allows employees to work around a schedule that suits them best. Other creative ways to reduce stress might be to offer concierge services, on-site child care, wellness initiatives, and massage therapy. All these options can garner loyalty and higher productivity from employees.

### Human Resource Recall

What does your organization do to reduce stress? What should it do that it is not doing?

### Cumulative Trauma Disorders

**Cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs)**<sup>13</sup> are injuries to the fingers, hands, arms, or shoulders that result from repetitive motions such as typing.

**Carpal tunnel syndrome**<sup>14</sup>, or CTS, is a common cumulative disorder in which the hand and wrist is particularly affected. CTS is a disabling syndrome that fortunately can be prevented or at least minimized. According to one study of CTS, A. C. Matias, G. Salvendy, and T. Kuczek, *Ergonomics Journal* 41, no. 2 (1998): 213–26, accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9494433>. the percentage of a workday at a computer, posture while at the workstation, and the individual’s body features all contribute to this workplace issue. More recently, CTD can be found in people who text a lot or use their smartphones to type or surf the Internet.

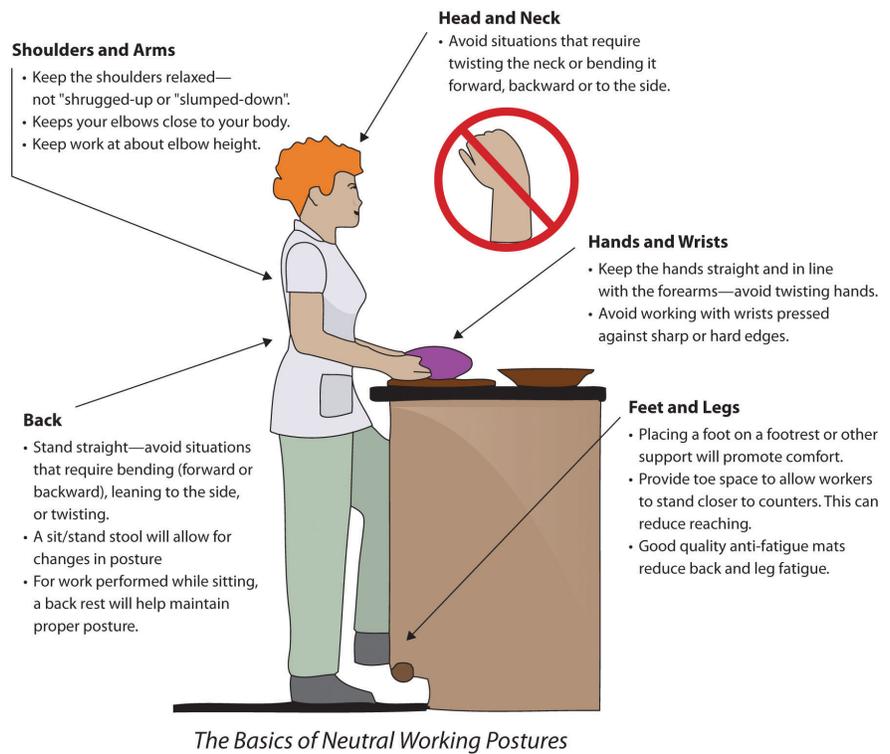
There are a number of keyboards, chairs, and other devices that can help limit or prevent CTD issues. CTD disorders cost companies money through higher health-care costs and workers’ compensation#8217; compensation payments. CTD is a required recordable case under OSHA. OSHA has voluntary employer guidelines for reducing CTD in specific industries such as poultry processing, shipyards, retail grocery, and nursing homes. OSHA is currently developing standards for industry-specific and task-specific jobs. “OSHA Protocol for Developing Industry-Specific and Task-Specific Ergonomics Guidelines,” Occupational Safety and Health Administration, accessed April 25, 2011, <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/protocol.html>.

13. Injury to the fingers, hands, arms, or shoulders, which is the result of repetitive motions such as typing.

14. A cumulative disorder of the hand and wrist as a result of too much computer work.

Microsoft is attempting to relieve CTD by developing “surface” technology. First introduced in 2007, the system is controlled through intuitive touch rather than the traditional mouse and keyboard. Microsoft and Samsung in early 2011 introduced the newest consumer-ready product, which looks like a large tablet (or iPad) used to perform the same functions as one normally would on her computer. Microsoft News Center, “Microsoft and Samsung Unveil the Next Generation of Surface,” news release, January 2011, accessed August 21, 2011, <http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/press/2011/jan11/01-06mssurfacesamsungpr.mspix>.

Figure 13.4 Example of an OSHA Standard for Retail Grocery Stores to Avoid CTD



Source: <http://www.osha.gov/ergonomics/guidelines/retailgrocery/retailgrocery.html#storewide> (accessed September 2, 2011).

## How Would You Handle This?

*To Tell or Not?*

You work for a large multinational organization as a manager on the factory floor. One of your employees was moving large barrels of chemicals from one workstation to another, when the barrel burst and gave him

*mild burns. When you talk with him about it, he says it was his own fault, and he doesn't want to take any days off or see a doctor. How would you handle this?*

*How Would You Handle This?*

<https://api.wistia.com/v1/medias/1360951/embed>

*The author discusses the How Would You Handle This situation in this chapter at: <https://api.wistia.com/v1/medias/1360951/embed>.*

### **Video Display Terminals (VDTs)**

In 1984, only 25 percent of people used computers at work, and today that number is 68 percent. "Survey Shows Widespread Enthusiasm for High Technology," *NPR Online*, n.d., accessed August 20, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/technology/>. Awareness of the effects of computer monitors and other similar terminals are necessary to ensure a healthy workplace. Vision problems; fatigue; eye strain; and neck, back, arm, and muscle pain are common for frequent users of VDTs. OSHA recommends taking a break after every hour on a computer screen and reducing glare on screens. Proper posture and seat adjustment also limits the amount of injuries due to VDTs.

Figure 13.5 VDT Checklist to Reduce Workplace Injuries

Video Display Terminal (VDT) Checklist		
<b>Can the work station be adjusted to ensure proper posture by</b>		
- adjusting knee and hip angles to achieve comfort and variability,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- supporting heels and toes on the floor or on a footrest,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- placing arms comfortably at the side and hands parallel to the floor, and	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- supporting wrist (nearly straight) on a padded surface?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the work area</b>		
- provide enough clearance for the feet, knees, and legs relative to the edge of the work surface,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- provide sufficient space for the thighs between the work surface and the seat,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- include arm rests for intensive or long duration keying jobs, and	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- include headsets for use when frequent telephone work is combined with hand tasks such as typing, using a calculator, or writing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the chair</b>		
- adjust easily from the seated position,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- have a padded seat pan,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- have a seat that is approximately 18 inches wide (45.72 centimeters),	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- have a back rest that provides lumbar support that can be used while working,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- have a stable base with casters that are suited to the type of flooring,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- have different seat pan lengths (15 to 17 inches or 38.10 and 43.18 centimeters) with a waterfall design available, and	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- allow the seat pan to adjust for both height (minimum of 4 1/2 inches or 10.16–12.7 centimeters) and angle (plus or minus 3 degrees)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the keyboard</b>		
- height from the floor and the slope of the keyboard surface adjustable,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- prevented from slipping when in use, and	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- detachable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are other inputs/devices (mouse, pointer, calculator)</b>		
- at keyboard height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the display screen</b>		
- clean and free from flickering, and	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- able to swivel horizontally and tilt or elevate vertically?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the monitor situated so that</b>		
- the work can be performed with the head in a neutral posture for most of the work shift,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- it is between 18 and 30 inches (45.72 and 76.20 centimeters, respectively) away from the operator,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- the top line of text is at or slightly below eye height, and	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- there is sufficient lighting without glare on the screen from lights, windows, or surfaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the monitor</b>		
- have brightness and contrast controls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the job organized so that</b>		
- workers can change postures frequently,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- workers can perform different job tasks to reduce intensive keying,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- workers can leave their workstations for at least 10 minutes after each hour of intensive keying and for at least 15 minutes after every 2 hours of intermittent keying, and?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
- the workers have received training in ergonomics and know how to make adjustments to their work stations, chairs, and other accessories?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

## Chemical and Fragrance Sensitivities

The EEOC defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of individuals and the ability to provide evidence of such an impairment. “Section 902: Definition of the Term Disability,” Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed April 25, 2011, <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/902cm.html#902.1>. Because of this definition, people who have **multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) or environmental illness (EI)**<sup>15</sup> are eligible for reasonable accommodations in the workplace. MCS or EI is the inability to tolerate an environmental chemical or class of foreign chemicals. Symptoms can include headache, dizziness, inability to breathe, muscle pain, and many more depending on the person. As a result, implementing policies surrounding MCS may be not only a legal requirement but a best practice to keep employees safe and healthy in the workplace. Some examples of such policies might include the following:

15. The inability to tolerate an environmental chemical or class of foreign chemicals.

1. Institute a fragrance-free workplace policy (e.g., no scented lotions, hair products, or perfumes).
2. Limit use of restroom air fresheners, cleaning agents, and candles.

3. Ensure the ventilation system is in good working order.
4. Provide a workspace with windows where possible.
5. Consider providing an alternate workspace.
6. Be cautious of remodels, renovations, and other projects that may cause excessive dust and odors.

If an organization is going to implement a fragrance-free work policy, this is normally addressed under the dress code area of the organization's employee manual. However, many employers are reluctant to require employees to refrain from wearing or using scented products. In this case, rather than creating a policy, it might be worthwhile to simply request a fragrance-free zone from employees through e-mail and other means of communication. An example of such a policy is used by Kaiser Permanente:

We recognize that exposure to strong scents and fragrances in the environment can cause discomfort, as well as directly impact the health of some individuals. Since we hope to support a healthful environment for employees, physicians, and visitors, it is the intent of Quality and Operations Support to strive for a fragrance-controlled workplace. Therefore, for the comfort and health of all, use of scents and fragrant products by QOS employees, other than minimally scented personal care products, is strongly discouraged. Kaiser Permanente Fragrance Policy, accessed September 15, 2011, <http://users.lmi.net/wilworks/ehnlrx/k.htm>.

## Chemicals and Substances

OSHA, as we mentioned earlier, has certain standards for how chemicals should be handled and how they should be labeled. Chemicals should be labeled in English, and employees must be able to cross-reference the chemicals to the materials safety data sheet, which describes how the chemicals should be handled.

It is estimated that 1,200 new chemicals are developed in North America alone every year. International Labor Organization, "Your Safety and Health at Work: Chemicals in the Workplace," accessed April 25, 2011, <http://actrav.itcilo.org/actrav-english/telearn/osh/kemi/ciwmain.htm>. For many of these chemicals, little is known about their immediate or long-term effects on the health of workers who come into contact with them. As a result, policies should be developed on how chemicals should be handled, and proper warnings should be given as to the harmful effects of any chemicals found in a job site.

In the United States, twenty-six of the fifty states have smoking bans in enclosed public spaces. These smoking bans are designed to protect workers' health from the dangers of secondhand smoke. A recent report released by the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention Julie Steenhuisen, “26 US States Have Comprehensive Smoking Bans,” *Reuters*, April 21, 2011, accessed April 25, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/21/usa-smoking-idUSN2128332820110421>. says that state or local smoke-free laws cover 47.8 percent of workplaces. The report says if the trend continues, the United States will be 100 percent smoke free by 2020. Many companies implement no-smoking policies because of health-care costs, and some companies, such as Humana, Inc., say their no-tobacco policy is simply setting a good example (since they are a health-care organization). Humana tests all applicants for tobacco in a preemployment screening that applies to all tobacco products. “Insurer Humana Inc. Won’t Hire Smokers in Arizona,” *Associated Press*, June 30, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Insurer-Humana-Inc-wont-hire-apf-961910618.html?x=0&.v=1>. Most workplaces have no-smoking policies, and some even prefer not to hire smokers because of the higher cost of health care. Policies dealing with substances and chemicals are an important part of any employee training and orientation.

## Benefits to a Smoke-Free Work Environment and Sample Policy

### For the employees

- A smoke-free environment helps create a safer, healthier workplace.
- Workers who are bothered by smoke will not be exposed to it at work.
- Smokers who want to quit may have more of a reason to do so.
- Smokers may appreciate a clear company policy about smoking at work.
- Managers are relieved when there is a clearly defined process for dealing with smoking in the workplace.

### For the employer

- A smoke-free environment helps create a safer, healthier workplace.
- Direct health-care costs to the company may be reduced.
- A clear plan that is carefully put into action by the employer to lower employees' exposure to secondhand smoke shows the company cares.
- Employees may be less likely to miss work due to smoking-related illnesses.
- Maintenance costs go down when smoke, matches, and cigarette butts are taken out of work facilities.
- Office equipment, carpets, and furniture last longer.
- The risk of fires is lower.
- It may be possible to get lower rates on health, life, and disability insurance coverage as fewer employees smoke.

### Sample smoking policy

Because we recognize the hazards caused by exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, it shall be the policy of \_\_\_\_\_ to provide a smoke-free environment for all employees and visitors. This policy covers the smoking of

any tobacco product and the use of oral tobacco products or "spit" tobacco, and it applies to both employees and nonemployee visitors of \_\_\_\_\_.

Source: American Cancer Society, <http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/StayAwayfromTobacco/Smoke-freeCommunities/CreatesSmoke-freeWorkplace/smoking-in-the-workplace-a-model-policy> (accessed August 20, 2011).

Drugs and alcohol are discussed in **Chapter 10 "Managing Employee Performance"** on managing performance issues. Substance abuse in the workplace can cause many problems for the organization. Not only does it create impaired ability to perform a job—resulting in more accidents—but it results in more sick days and less productivity, and substance abusers are more likely to file workers' compensation claims. Keep in mind that taking prescription drugs, if not used in the proper amounts or used long after the prescribed use, is considered substance abuse. A drug-free policy, according to OSHA, "Workplace Substance Abuse," Occupational Safety and Health Administration, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/substanceabuse/index.html>, has five parts:

1. A policy
2. Supervisor training
3. Employee education
4. Employee assistance
5. Drug testing

According to the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, substance abuse costs companies over \$100 billion in the United States alone. T. Buddy, "Substance Abuse in the Workplace," About.com, November 20, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/work/aa990120.htm>. This staggering figure alone makes it worthwhile for companies to implement a policy and training on substance abuse.

## Workplace Substance Abuse

[\(click to see video\)](#)

*This video provides some advice on how to deal with employee personal problems, including drug abuse.*

## Workplace Violence and Bullying

According to OSHA, 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence every year. “Workplace Violence” (OSHA Fact Sheet), Occupational Safety and Health Administration, accessed April 25, 2011, [http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data\\_General\\_Facts/factsheet-workplace-violence.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/factsheet-workplace-violence.pdf). OSHA addresses some of the workers who are at increased risk for workplace violence:

1. Workers who exchange money with the public
2. Workers who deliver goods, passengers, or services
3. People who work alone or in small groups
4. Workers who work late at night or early in the morning
5. Workers who work in high-crime areas

It is up to the organization and human resources to implement policies to ensure the safety of workers and provide a safe working environment. OSHA provides tips to provide a safer workplace:

1. Establish a workplace violence prevention policy, with a zero tolerance policy.
2. Provide safety education.
3. Secure the workplace with cameras, extra lighting, and alarm systems.
4. Provide a drop safe to limit the amount of cash on hand.
5. Provide cell phones to workers.
6. Require employees to travel in groups using a “buddy system.”

Development of workplace policies surrounding these items is important. Ongoing training and development in these areas are key to the creation of a safe workplace. While outside influences may affect employee safety, it is also important to be aware of the employee’s safety from other employees. There are several indicators of prevalence as noted by the Workplace Violence Research Institute: Jurg Mattman, “Pre-Incident Indicators,” Workplace Violence Research Institute, June 2010, accessed April 27, 2011, <http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/RESPECT/pdf/RESPECT-Pre-IncidentIndicators24Jun09.pdf>.

1. Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs
2. Unexplained increase in absenteeism
3. Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
4. Depression and withdrawal
5. Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
6. Threats or verbal abuse to coworkers and supervisors
7. Repeated comments that indicate suicidal tendencies

8. Frequent, vague physical complaints
9. Noticeably unstable emotional responses
10. Behavior indicative of paranoia
11. Preoccupation with previous incidents of violence
12. Increased mood swings
13. Has a plan to “solve all problems”
14. Resistance and overreaction to changes in procedures
15. Increase of unsolicited comments about firearms and other dangerous weapons
16. Repeated violations of company policies
17. Escalation of domestic problems

## Workplace Violence

A video on workplace violence training.

Please view this video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiuWLkdUZ5o>.

Anyone exhibiting one or more of these preincident indicators should get the attention of HRM. The HR professional should take appropriate action such as discussing the problem with the employee and offering counseling.

**Workplace bullying**<sup>16</sup> is defined as a tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent or repeated aggressive or unreasonable behavior against a coworker or subordinate. The Workplace Bullying Institute found that 35 percent of workers have reported being bullied at work. This number is worth considering, given that workplace bullying reduces productivity with missed work days and turnover. The Workplace Bullying Institute found that litigation and settlement of bullying lawsuits can cost organizations \$100,000 to millions of dollars, in addition to the bad publicity that may be created. Examples of workplace bullying include the following:

16. A tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent or repeated aggressive or unreasonable behavior against a coworker or subordinate.

1. Unwarranted or invalid criticism
2. Blame without factual information
3. Being treated differently than the rest of your work group
4. Humiliation

5. Unrealistic work deadlines
6. Spreading rumors
7. Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work

In an Indiana Supreme court case, a hospital employee who was repeatedly bullied by a surgeon sued for emotional distress and won. This ruling drew national attention because it was an acknowledgment by the courts of the existence of workplace bullying as a phenomenon. Karen Klein, "Employers Can't Ignore Workplace Bullies," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, May 7, 2008, accessed August 20, 2011, [http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/may2008/sb2008057\\_530667.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/may2008/sb2008057_530667.htm). Prevention of workplace bullying means creating a culture in which employees are comfortable speaking with HR professionals and managers (assuming they are not the ones bullying) about these types of situations. Similar to traditional bullying, **cyberbullying**<sup>17</sup> is defined as use of the Internet or technology used to send text that is intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Examples include using Facebook to post negative comments or setting up a fake e-mail account to send out fake e-mails from that person. Comments or blogs and posts that show the victim in a bad light are other examples of cyberbullying. Similar to workplace bullying, cyberbullying is about power and control in workplace relationships. Elizabeth Carll's research on cyberbullying shows that people who experience this type of harassment are more likely to experience heightened anxiety, fear, shock, and helplessness, which can result in lost productivity at work and retention issues. Madeleine White, "Are Cyber Bullies Worse for Victims than Real Bullies?" *Globe and Mail*, August 8, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-hot-button/are-cyber-bullies-worse-for-victims-than-real-bullies/article2122943/> a major concern for the HR professional. The US Justice Department shows that some 850,000 adults have been targets of online harassment. Madeleine White, "Are Cyber Bullies Worse for Victims than Real Bullies?" *Globe and Mail*, August 8, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-hot-button/are-cyber-bullies-worse-for-victims-than-real-bullies/article2122943/>. Many states, including New York, Missouri, Rhode Island, and Maryland, have passed laws against digital harassment as far back as 2007. National Conference of State Legislatures, "State Cyberstalking, Cyberharassment, and Cyberbullying Laws," January 26, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=13495>. In a recent cyberbullying case, a US Court of Appeals upheld a school's discipline of a student for engaging in off-campus cyberbullying of another student. Daniel Solove, "Off Campus Cyberbullying and the First Amendment," *Huffington Post*, July 28, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-j-solove/offcampus-cyberbullying-a\\_b\\_911654.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-j-solove/offcampus-cyberbullying-a_b_911654.html). In the case, the victim said a MySpace profile was created that included inappropriate pictures of her, and the page's creator invited other people to join. The student who created the page sued the school after she was disciplined for it, saying it violated her right to free speech, but courts found that students do not have the right to cyberbully other students. While it seems

17. A type of bullying in which Internet or technology is used to send text intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

that cyberbullying is for young people, as mentioned earlier, 35 percent of American workers feel they have been bullied. Bullying should be identified immediately and handled, as it affects workplace productivity, customer satisfaction, and eventually, profits.

## Workplace Bullies

[\(click to see video\)](#)

*This video provides tips on how to deal with a workplace bully.*

## Employee Privacy

In today's world of identity theft, it is important that HR professionals work to achieve maximum security and privacy for employees. When private information is exposed, it can be costly. For example, in March of 2011, the Texas Comptroller's office inadvertently disclosed on a public website the names, addresses, and social security numbers of 3.5 million state workers. Patricia Hart, "Attorneys Seek to Question Texas Comptroller Over Exposed Info," *Houston Chronicle*, April 26, 2011, accessed April 27, 2011, <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/7537769.html>. The state has already spent \$1.8 million to remedy this problem by sending letters to affected parties and hiring technology consultants to review office procedures. While keeping employee information private is the responsibility of all management in an organization, ensuring privacy remains the job of the HR professional.

Some of the things to combat employee identity theft include the following:

1. Conduct background and criminal checks on employees who will have access to sensitive data.
2. Restrict access to areas where data is stored, including computers.
3. Provide training to staff who will have access to private employee information.
4. Keep information in locked files or in password-protected files.
5. Use numbers other than social security numbers to identify employees.

Another privacy issue that comes up often is the monitoring of employee activities on devices that are provided to them by the organization. Case law, for the most part, has decided that employees do not have privacy rights if they are using the organization's equipment, with a few exceptions. As a result, more than half of all companies engage in some kind of monitoring. According to an American Management Association "Electronic Monitoring and Surveillance Survey,"

American Management Association, 2007, accessed April 27, 2011, <http://press.amanet.org/press-releases/177/2007-electronic-monitoring-surveillance-survey/>. survey, 73 percent of employers monitor e-mail messages and 66 percent monitor web surfing. If your organization finds it necessary to implement monitoring policies, ensuring the following is important to employee buy-in of the monitoring:

1. Develop a policy for monitoring.
2. Communicate what will be monitored.
3. Provide business reasons for why e-mail and Internet must be monitored.

Working with your IT department to implement standards and protect employee data kept on computers is a must in today's connected world. Communication of a privacy policy is an important step as well. Agrium, a Canadian-based supplier of agricultural products in North America, states its employee privacy policy on its website and shares with employees the tactics used to prevent security breaches. "Employee Privacy Policy," Agrium Inc., accessed August 21, 2011, [http://www.agrium.com/employee\\_privacy.jsp](http://www.agrium.com/employee_privacy.jsp).

At Agrium we are committed to maintaining the accuracy, confidentiality, and security of your personal information. This Privacy Policy describes the personal information that Agrium collects from or about you, and how we use and to whom we disclose that information.

## **Terrorism**

Since the 9/11 attacks, terrorism and its effect on the workplace are in the forefront of the HR professional's mind. Planning for evacuations is the job of everyone in an organization, but HR should initiate this discussion. OSHA provides free assistance in implementing plans and procedures in case of a terror attack. OSHA also provides a fill-in-the-blank system (<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/expertsystem/default.htm>) to help organizations write a comprehensive report for evacuations and terrorist attacks.

## **Promoting a Culture of Safety and Health**

Employee health and safety is a must in today's high-stress work environments. Although some may see employee health as something that shouldn't concern HR, the increasing cost of health benefits makes it in the best interest of the company to hire and maintain healthy employees. In fact, during the recession of the late 2000s, when cutbacks were common, 50 percent of all workplaces increased or planned to

increase investments in wellness and health at their organization. Donald Sears, “Gym Memberships and Wellness Programs Remain Standard Employee Benefits,” The Ladders Career Line, July 21, 2009, accessed April 27, 2011, <http://www.careerline.com/job-search/gym-memberships-and-wellness-programs-remain-standard-employee-benefits/>.

## Example of Health and Safety Policy

Cordis (A Johnson & Johnson Company) Environmental, Health, and Safety Policy

Cordis Corporation is committed to global Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) performance and leadership with respect to its associates, customers, suppliers, contractors, visitors, and communities. To fulfill this commitment, Cordis Corporation conducts its business emphasizing regulatory compliance and collaboration.

We strive for:

- Comprehensive risk management
- Pollution prevention
- Healthy lifestyle culture
- Continuous improvement and sustainability
- Engaging partnerships
- Possession of outstanding EHS capabilities and skill sets

We affirm that EHS is:

- A core business value and a key indicator of organizational excellence
- Considered in every task we perform and in every decision we make

We believe that:

- All incidents and injuries are preventable
- Process Excellence is the driver for continuous improvement and sustainable results in all aspects of EHS
- Every associate is responsible and accountable for complying with all aspects of EHS, creating a safe and healthy work environment while leaving the smallest environmental footprint

A safe culture doesn't happen by requiring training sessions every year; it occurs by creating an environment in which people can recognize hazards and have the authority and ability to fix them. Instead of safety being a management focus only, every employee should take interest by being alert to the safety issues that can exist. If an employee is unable to handle the situation on his or her own, the manager should then take suggestions from employees seriously; making the change and then communicating the change to the employee can be an important component of a safe and healthy workplace.

A culture that promotes safety is one that never puts cost or production numbers ahead of safety. You do not want to create a culture in which health and safety priorities compete with production speedup, which can lead to a dangerous situation.

Another option to ensure health and safety is to implement an **employee assistance program (EAP)**<sup>18</sup>. This benefit is intended to help employees with personal problems that could affect their performance at work. The EAP usually includes covered counseling and referral services. This type of program can assist employees with drug or alcohol addictions, emotional issues such as depression, stress management, or other personal issues. Sometimes these programs are outsourced to organizations that can provide in-house training and referral services to employees. For example, REI (Recreation Equipment Inc.), based in Seattle, has a comprehensive EAP for its employees in both retail stores and corporate offices.

Possible techniques you can implement to have a safe and healthy work environment include the following:

1. Know OSHA and other safety laws.
2. Provide training to employees on OSHA and safety laws.
3. Have a written policy for how violations will be handled.
4. Commit the resources (time and money) necessary to ensure a healthy work environment.
5. Involve employees in safety and health discussions, as they may have good ideas as to how the organization can improve.
6. Make safety part of an employee's job description; in other words, hold employees accountable for always practicing safety at work.
7. Understand how the health (or lack of health) of your employees contributes to or takes away from the bottom line and implement policies and programs to assist in this effort.

18. A benefit intended to help employees with personal problems that could affect their performance at work.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Stress is a major concern for organizations, since it can decrease productivity in the workplace. There are several types of stress.
- *Eustress* is a positive type of stress that can cause people to work harder toward a goal. *Distress*, on the other hand, is a type of negative stress.
- *Acute stress* occurs in short bursts, such as when finishing a project, while *chronic stress* tends to persist for long periods of time.
- *Hyperstress* is stress that is unrelieved for long periods of time and can often result in employee burnout. *Hypostress* is the lack of eustress in one's life, which can be as damaging as other types of stress, since stress is sometimes what pushes people harder.
- HR professionals can encourage employees to take vacation time, offer flextime, and encourage employees to take weekends off to help reduce stress.
- *Cumulative trauma disorder (CTD)* affects the hands, fingers, arms, or shoulders as a result of continuous repetitive motions. *Carpel tunnel syndrome (CTS)* is a type of CTD that affects the hand and wrist. People with these disorders often work in a factory or at a desk where they are doing repetitive motions constantly, such as typing or cashiering.
- OSHA has voluntary guidelines for reducing CTD in the workplace. HR can assist by ensuring employees are provided with proper equipment and training.
- *Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)* or *environmental illness (EI)* is extreme sensitivity to chemicals found in products such as hairsprays or lotions. Some individuals are extremely sensitive to other types of chemicals, such as those used in the manufacturing of carpets.
- MCS can be considered a disability if it limits one or more life activities. In this case, reasonable accommodations must be made, such as implementing fragrance-free zones as part of a workplace dress code.
- OSHA has specific guidelines on how to handle chemicals, but other chemicals, such as those from secondhand smoke, are an important consideration in workplace safety. Twenty-six states, for example, have implemented no-smoking policies to help protect the health of workers.
- *Workplace violence* affects 2 million Americans every year. A number of groups, such as those who deliver goods, people, or services, are at greatest risk. However, workplace violence can occur internally, which is why we must be aware of the warning signs.
- *Workplace bullying* is when a person is aggressive and unreasonable in his or her behavior toward another individual. *Cyberbullying* is similar, except technology is used to humiliate and intimidate the employee.
- Keeping employee information private is the job of HR and IT. In addition, some organizations may engage in web or e-mail monitoring to

ensure employees are on task. Specific policies should be developed and communicated to let employees know how they may be monitored.

- Some organizations have *employee assistance programs (EAPs)* that can provide assistance, counseling, and the like in case of personal problems or drug or alcohol abuse.
- To maintain a healthful working environment, know OSHA policies and make sure people are trained on the policies. Also ensure that specific policies on all areas of health and safety are communicated and employees are trained in those areas where necessary.

## EXERCISES

1. Visit <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/expertsystem/default.htm> and create your own evacuation plan using the tool on the OSHA website. (Note: web addresses sometimes change, so you may have to search further for the tool.) Bring your plan to class to share.
2. Research examples of workplace bullying, write two paragraphs about two examples, and share your findings with the class.

## **13.3 Cases and Problems**

## Chapter Summary

- Every year, 4,340 fatalities and 3.3 million injuries occur in the workplace in the United States.
- The *Occupational Safety and Health Act* was passed in 1970, with the goal of providing a safe and healthy work environment for all US workers.
- The *Occupational Safety and Health Administration* is part of the US Department of Labor and was created as a result of the act in 1970.
- OSHA applies to some specific industries such as construction, shipyards, and marine terminals. However, some of the regulations of OSHA apply to all industries.
- Some states may also have safety requirements, which may be more stringent than federal Laws.
- Right-to-know laws refer to a *material data safety sheet*, which discusses the types of chemicals, proper handling and storage, and first aid in case of an accident. These data sheets should be made available to the general public and employees.
- Right-to-know laws also require specific reporting to local and state agencies on chemicals used in certain quantities for some industries.
- OSHA requires recording keeping for all workplace accidents or illness. The record keeping is usually the responsibility of HR; OSHA Form 300 is used for reporting purposes.
- OSHA can inspect any site without prior notification. Usually, it will gather information, visit the site, and ask for a representative. The representative is normally the HR person. The site visit will be performed, followed by discussion with the company representative. Within six months of the visit a report and any penalties will be communicated.
- Stress is a major concern for organizations, since it can decrease productivity in the workplace. There are several types of stress.
- *Eustress* is a positive type of stress that can cause people to work harder toward a goal. *Distress*, on the other hand, is a type of negative stress.
- *Acute stress* occurs in short bursts, such as when finishing a project, while *chronic stress* tends to persist for long periods of time.
- *Hyperstress* is stress that is unrelieved for long periods of time and can often result in employee burnout. *Hypostress* is the lack of eustress in one's life, which can be as damaging as other types of stress, since stress is sometimes what pushes people harder.
- HR professionals can encourage employees to take vacation time, offer flextime, and encourage employees to take weekends off to help reduce stress.
- *Cumulative trauma disorder (CTD)* affects the hands, fingers, arms, or shoulders as a result of continuous repetitive motions. *Carpel tunnel syndrome (CTS)* is a type of CTD that affects the hand and wrist. People with these disorders often work in a factory or at a desk where they are doing repetitive motions constantly, such as typing or cashiering.
- OSHA has voluntary guidelines for reducing CTD in the workplace. HR can assist by ensuring employees are provided with proper equipment and training.
- *Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)* or *environmental illness (EI)* is extreme sensitivity to chemicals found in products such as hairsprays or lotions. Some individuals are extremely sensitive to other types of chemicals, such as those used in the manufacturing of carpets.

- MCS can be considered a disability if it limits one or more of life activities. In this case, reasonable accommodations must be made, such as implementing fragrance-free zones as part of a workplace dress code.
- OSHA has specific guidelines on how to handle chemicals, but other chemicals, such as those from secondhand smoke, are an important consideration in workplace safety. Twenty-six states, for example, have implemented no-smoking policies to help protect the health of workers.
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- To maintain a healthful working environment, know OSHA policies and make sure people are trained on the policies. Also ensure that specific policies on all areas of health and safety are communicated and employees are trained in those areas where necessary.

### Summary

[\(click to see video\)](#)

*The author provides a video summary of the chapter.*

## Chapter Case

### Bullying Ming

You just ended a meeting with Ming (one of your six employees), who gave you some disturbing information. She feels she is being bullied by one of her coworkers and is seeking your advice on how to handle it. Ming said that Mindy has been saying “good morning” to everyone as she walks by their office but doesn’t say it to Ming. Ming also said that Mindy organized a farewell lunch for one of your departing employees last week and didn’t invite Ming. She also told you of nasty things that Mindy tells other colleagues about her. For example, last month when Ming ran into Mindy at the grocery store, Mindy told everyone the next day the medications that Ming had in her cart, which included medication for irritable bowel syndrome. Ming also showed you an e-mail that Mindy had sent blaming Ming for the loss of one of Mindy’s clients. Mindy had copied the entire department on the e-mail. Ming thinks that other employees have been reluctant to involve her in projects as a result of this e-mail. Ming left your office quite upset, and you think you may need to take some action.

1. Do you think Ming is correct in saying Mindy is bullying her? What are the indications of bullying?
2. What advice would you give to Ming?
3. How would you handle this situation with Mindy, without embarrassing Ming?

## Team Activity

1. Calculate the yearly incidence rates for Organic Foods Company:
  - a. 2010: 10 injuries with 300,000 hours worked
  - b. 2011: 5 injuries with 325,000 hours worked
  - c. 2012: 20 injuries with 305,000 hours worked
2. What are some of the possible causes for the increase in incidence rates?