

April 2024

BALANCING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

New
Welding Fumes
Standard

Is it Legal to
Park on a
Nature Strip?

Is There
Too Much
“High Viz”?

What's New in April?

Andrea discuss balancing stress in the workplace and how thinking about stress positively can be beneficial.

Also this month;

- Is it legal to park on a nature strip?
- New welding fumes standard.
- Our tips on "High Viz" workwear.
- Join our Safety Leadership workshop in June.

Stay Safe!



SAFETY ACTION TEAM



Gary Rowe



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Safety Webinar – 12th April 2024

Join us at 10am on the Friday 12th April for our **FREE** monthly webinar to keep you up to date on Workplace Health and Safety. Gary and the team present short informal sessions of only 20 to 30 minutes on topical issues and answer your question.

[Register Here](#)

Missed any of our last webinars? View them [here](#)

Balancing Stress in the Workplace

And How to Benefit From It

Is There Too Much Psychological Safety?

Whilst the focus on workplace health and safety in recent years has correctly highlighted the importance of psychological safety, eg feel safe to speak up and be treated with respect, advice from the Human Resources Centre at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn Uni) have issued a cautionary note.

More psychological safety may not always be better

Professor Peter Cappelli, of "Penn Uni" explains some jobs involve repetitive and standardised tasks where we want employees to strictly follow rules and not take risks, especially where we cannot afford mistakes.

For example, feeling psychologically safe is important when we want nurses to speak up and help figure out how to improve medical practices, but once they go onto the hospital floor to take care of patients, we don't want them to take risks or implement their own new procedures.

So, how much psychological safety is useful? Studies typically focus on average effects, but psychological safety is not "either or", but specific to each individual and the workplace circumstances.

Professor Cappelli reports that when businesses move from poor to average psychological safety it invariably helps, but when businesses move from average to high focus on psychological safety, they found performance actually declined.

Performance declines when there is too much focus on psychological safety.

It is suggested that where bosses push the "***no bad ideas here***" view encourages people to take risks when they shouldn't. A more fundamental problem involves "***mistakes will not be held against me***" principle. While it makes perfect sense to tolerate mistakes when we want workers to innovate and be flexible, it does not make sense in jobs where we need everyone to follow the rules, conform to standards and not take risks.

There should be consequences for poor performance, as agreed by psychological safety experts, but this point is often overlooked in workplaces where psychological safety is the pre-eminent focus.



Workers need feedback on performance, whether good or bad

Many businesses push psychological safety way too broadly

For example, if your team reports there is zero chance they would be held accountable for making mistakes, Psychological safety would be rated very high. That's fine if the job involves taking calculated risks eg insurance underwriter or stockbrokers, but not OK for most jobs.

Professor Cappelli explains the negative effects of "excessive" psychological safety eg ***"I am not responsible for my performance, and I will not be criticised for poor performance"***, can be off-set where there is strong group responsibility to achieve agreed performance and targets.

The dilemma for frontline supervisors is how they balance:

- a) Achieving business performance and goals and holding workers accountable, with
- b) Creating psychologically safe work environments.

The conclusions of the Penn Uni study is that "excessive" focus on ensuring everyone is totally comfortable and never fearing criticism for poor work performance is actually harmful.

Based on article in The Weekend Australian 17 February 2024

Stress is Good For You If You Think it is

Stress is harmful when you believe it is.

We've all heard that stress is bad for us and that it's the cause of many illnesses. But research suggests that we should embrace stress.

In one 2006 US study, researchers discovered that high levels of stress increased the risk of death by as much as 43 percent. But this was only in people who believed stress was harmful. Those who reported high stress levels but didn't believe it was harmful had the lowest risk of death of all participants, leading to the conclusion that stress is harmful – when you believe it is.

One study at Yale University showed that people who looked positively upon old age lived 7.6 years longer. That's a lot more than the extra four years you earn by exercising and not smoking!

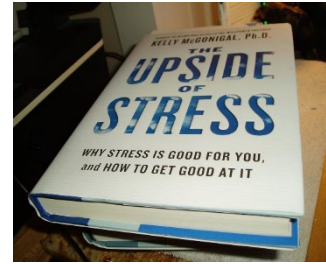
Positivity is a form of belief so powerful that it can influence your body's health.

Your attitude toward stress is a central part of your mindset which shapes the choices you make in everyday life. If you view stress as harmful, you tend to try and avoid it at all costs. People who view stress as helpful, on the other hand, are more likely to come up with strategies to cope with the source of stress, seek help and make the best of the situation.

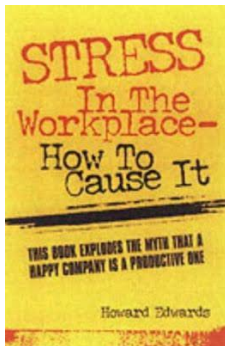


If your workplace wellbeing programs tell workers that stress is harming them- it probably is.. whereas messages that promote positivity should have greater benefits to overall worker health

Read more about the above research in the book by Psychologist Kelly McGonigal ' *The Upside of Stress: Why Stress Is Good for You, and How to Get Good at It* ' or watch Kelly's Ted talk with over 32 million views: [How to make stress your friend.](#)



Stress in the Workplace Is Also Good for Business



Another unconventional perspective is described in the book *Stress in the workplace- how to cause it*. Howard Edwards explodes the myth that a happy company is a productive one.

In a satirical approach to workplace management, focusing on intentionally inducing stress to increase productivity, Edwards explains that stress has a vital role to play in a company's success. Too many businesses focus on employee contentment and team building, whereas the feel-good factor makes staff more placid and therefore less competitive.

(It's important to note that excessive stress can lead to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and other negative outcomes. In a real-world setting, a balance between motivation and well-being is crucial for sustainable productivity and a positive work environment.)

Safety Leadership Workshop Foundation Course

At Safety Action we believe that all frontline managers and supervisors need help and practical guidance on how to balance psychological safety and workplace safety and performance.

Our next safety leadership foundation course is a good starting place. [Book in to our next public safety leadership course below or email](#) or phone us on 03 8544 4300 for a quote for in-house training and workplace psychological health & safety risk assessments.



When: 18th and 19th June

8 am to 4 pm each day at Safety Action, Clayton.

Includes catering, training materials and comprehensive manual.

Early Bird Price until 30th May \$980+GST (Normally \$1,500 +GST).

Click [here](#) For more information and to register or [email](#) us.

Is it Legal to Park on a Nature Strip?



According to the Australian Road Rules, that all states and territories generally observe, it is illegal to park on a nature strip.

However, it is up to local councils to decide if and how they will enforce this rule.

Section 197 of Australian Road Rules states "a driver must not stop on a bicycle path, footpath, shared path or dividing strip, or a nature strip adjacent to a length of road in a built-up area."

What if you leave two wheels on the road and only have two wheels on the nature strip to help passing traffic on narrow streets? We understand councils with a strict approach to enforcement of the national rule may still issue fines even in these circumstances.

Fines vary by state and territory. For example, \$50 in WA, about \$600 in Vic, to \$3,200 in ACT for disobeying a road rule.

There are exceptions to this general rule including:

1. A parking control sign allows parking on the nature strip.
2. Another law applies in this jurisdiction.



Car with 2 wheels on nature strip to give passing traffic more room

For example, some WA councils permit parking on nature strips as long as the motorist has permission from the property owner / occupant eg you park in front of your own premises. Tasmania allows similar rules for owner / occupiers to park on their own nature strip.

Therefore, you need to check with your local council on any exceptions and their approach / leniency in their policing of this rule.

New Welding Fumes Standard

Safe Work Australia (SWA) have amended their booklet on Workplace Exposure for Airborne Contaminants to set a new lower exposure standard for welding fumes.

Why has the standard changed?

There is growing evidence that welding fumes are not only harmful but potentially carcinogenic and therefore require tighter controls, and this is what has driven the lower exposure standard.

Welding fumes have long been associated with an innocent sounding condition labelled "metal fume fever". However, increasingly this exposure is also being linked to cancer of the lungs, kidneys or larynx, stomach ulcers, and nervous system damage.



Welding fumes are toxic

What is the new welding fumes limit?

Previously SWA set a welding fume exposure limit of 5mg per cubic meter (5mg/m³).

The SWA exposure standard for welding fumes is now 1mg/m³.

What should we do?

This is a significant reduction, and many workplaces will need to:

- 1) Improve containment of welding fumes at the source,
- 2) Provide better exhaust ventilation for welding bays,
- 3) Provide and ensure correct use of respirators for added protection against welding fumes,
- 4) Conduct air monitoring if there is any doubt about the safety of worker's health or compliance.

How does an attorney sleep?
First, he lies on one side, then
he lies on the other side.

*apologies to our wonderful, and highly ethical, lawyer friends for our sense of humour.



Is There Too Much "High Viz"



Many workplaces have so much high visibility workwear that it can be confusing and feel like trying to "find Wally"? Here are our tips to help.

1. Limit High Viz Areas

Avoid the temptation to over-specify high visibility areas eg "when in doubt add more PPE", as high viz PPE loses impact if work areas have too many distractions eg high viz everywhere.

2. Interim Controls Essential

If this assessment indicates high visibility PPE is required, but currently not in place consider interim controls eg what you can put in place immediately, such as witches hats / tape to designate boundary and temporary signage.



3. Clearly Designate High Viz Areas

Ensure high viz areas are placarded and pedestrian walkways clearly defined eg signage at each entry, barriers or line marking.



4. Have PPE Available at Entry

Provide adequate number of high viz PPE at each entry point, to make it easy and convenient to comply, and remove excuses for not wearing high viz in placarded area.



High viz PPE at entry to work area eg for visitors

5. Conduct a Review for Permanent Controls

Conduct a traffic management review to determine short-term and permanent controls.

6. Use a Spotter for One-Off Movements of Plant

If an area does not normally require high viz (PPE), but you need to move plant through the area, use a spotter to guide equipment and keep pedestrians clear.



Spotter directing in-frequent traffic movement and keeping pedestrians clear to avoid making the area a high viz zone

7. Selection of High Viz Colours

When purchasing high viz specify or look for label stating it complies with Australian Standard **AS 4602.1: High Visibility Safety Garments**.

Day Time High Viz

The use of fluorescent high viz PPE is strongly recommended.

The main high viz colours are; red, yellow, and orange, or mixtures with these eg yellow-green, lime-yellow, and red-orange.



Non-fluorescent work shirts

Note: The use of non-fluorescent high viz should be confined to situations where for safety reasons garments need to be made of natural fibres that cannot incorporate the fluorescent pigments. For example, welding sparks risk fire with nylon high viz vests. Refer to AS 1906.4: High Viz materials for safety garments (s.2.4).

Night Work High Viz

If work involves night-time near the path of traffic, then fluorescent PPE with retro-reflective strips are recommended.

Some PPE will be labelled for day or night use and may also say for wet weather use.



Night-time high viz vest with retro-reflective strips.

8. Monitor

Finally, monitor compliance with PPE rules and possible need for different controls. If necessary, act promptly to ensure your high viz areas are appropriate and followed.

[Email us](#) or phone 03 8544 4300 for a copy of our High Visibility (PPE) Self-Assessment template.

Look Out For Everyone's Safety at Work Every Day.



On the 28th April workers and families from all over the world remember those who have been killed, injured or become ill while at work.

Join the Workers Memorial Day ceremony at 9am AEST online via [WorkSafe Queensland](#).