

Healthier  
Work.



# Work Environment

June 2023



**ACT**  
Government

# What is work environment?

*It's about creating a safe, inclusive and comfortable place to work.*




Work environment is the physical and psychological spaces created by your organisation. It's the equipment used by staff. It's the available spaces for different tasks, lunch breaks or meetings. It's making sure you have the right lighting, heating/cooling, and cleanliness. Equipment and materials used by your people must be well-maintained. Certain spaces can encourage healthy behaviours, such as facilities for showers after a ride to work. Policies, and systems for reporting and managing risks, such as trips or falls, bullying and fatigue are essential. Ongoing employee training to prevent injury is a core responsibility of an employer.

## Become a healthier workplace

This information sheet is designed to explain how to build your work environment in a practical way, offering a variety of strategies and actions you can take to achieve a healthier workplace. The breadth of options is extensive. Not all suggested activities will be relevant to your workplace, but it's important to cover work environment deficiencies identified in your Gap Assessment Report.





*Suggested actions and strategies listed in the following pages are labelled with icons to show what aspects of healthier work they address.*

### Take an integrated approach

 <p><b>Protect</b></p> <p>Prevent and minimise physical and psychological harm</p>	 <p><b>Support</b></p> <p>Provide services, interventions and resources</p>	 <p><b>Promote</b></p> <p>Build a positive and meaningful health culture</p>
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### Look at complete health

### Consider place and people

 <p><b>Physical</b></p> <p>Create physically safe environments</p>	 <p><b>Mental</b></p> <p>Create psychologically safe environments</p>	 <p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Make your workplace safe and healthy</p>	 <p><b>People</b></p> <p>Build awareness of healthy behaviours</p>
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# What you can do (actions and strategies)

## Workspace

Design spaces for specific activities or preferred ways of working. The way you set up workspaces can encourage healthier behaviours.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Make the physical working environment comfortable. Design it specifically for the tasks being done.							
Keep work areas clean and free of hazards. Have a process for checking them regularly. Always keep emergency exits clear.							
Make your lunchroom comfortable and spacious with table/s and chairs, fridge, hot and cold water, appliances and a staff notice board.							
Provide quiet work areas, particularly for moments of intense concentration.							
Provide meeting spaces that maintain safety, privacy and confidentiality for conversations that may be confidential or difficult.							
Provide a dedicated break space for relaxation and social connection.							
Minimise isolated work groups by providing collaborative digital workspaces and additional support to these groups. Consider other remote workspaces such as work hubs and communal offices and give opportunities for face to face interactions.							
Provide access to healthy drink and snack options in employee kitchens, cafés and vending machines.							
Provide bike racks, showers, change room facilities and lockers for walkers, runners and cyclists; or promote access to shared facilities.							



# Physical and psychological hazards

Identify potential hazards that could affect people’s physical or psychological safety. Have systems for employees to report concerns.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Make sure leaders and employees understand how to identify physical and psychological hazards in the workplace and know how to respond.							
Use a risk management system across your entire business.							
Be clear about how everyone should identify, assess and then eliminate/reduce or manage psychosocial and physical safety hazards.							
Document workplace hazards and proposed solutions across all work areas using a risk register (electronic and/or hard copy) or similar system.							
Using an appropriate system, encourage employees to report workplace safety hazards, incidents and near-miss incidents, including slips, trips, falls, workplace bullying or customer violence.							
Assess the risk of service-related violence or aggression, then use systems to manage this risk where employees may be exposed.							
Consider personal safety risks for employees working outside standard operating hours or on night shift. Create contact procedures to manage safety of employees, including in any areas where they may get locked in or out.							
Consider the additional risks of outdoor operations, such as weather conditions (sun, rain, hail, fog, frost, wind, adverse weather events), fires and smoke, exposure to animal hazards (bites and stings, aggressive animals, ticks, vermin), toxic or harsh weeds, chemicals or hazardous substances, plant and equipment.							



## Physical and psychological hazards (cont.)

Identify potential hazards that could affect people's physical or psychological safety. Have systems for employees to report concerns.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Have procedures for employees who work alone or in isolated locations. Consider regular contact, alternative communication methods if no phone service is available, fatigue due to tasks or equipment use, incident management, inclusion for work-related information, training and interaction with other employees.							
Identify and address bullying behaviour to improve workplace stress, productivity and wellbeing.							
Educate employees about the early warning signs of stress of fatigue. Provide a system so employees can report tiredness and take breaks when required.							
Identify any security or access hazards for employees when arriving or leaving the premises, such as transporting cash or other valuables, known hazardous locations, or poorly lit areas.							
Identify work hours that are high risk for stress and fatigue and minimise safety-critical tasks during these periods.							
Manage environmental hazards such as noise, vibration, poor lighting, dust, fumes and air quality, thermal comfort, poor ventilation or poorly designed equipment or processes.							
Reduce and minimise risk of fatigue through roster management.							
Follow risk management steps for risk of self harm in the workplace.							



# Plant, equipment and materials

























Regularly assess and maintain your plant, equipment and materials. Ongoing training can prevent injury.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Give employees the equipment they need to perform their duties, along with training to use it. Check equipment is maintained, updated or replaced as required.							
Give employees the tools and equipment they need to do their work in a physically safe and comfortable way. Identify any manual handling and ergonomic hazards and provide training/information. Do an assessment if an employee is uncomfortable or has an injury.							
Have plant and equipment maintenance and audit systems in place so tools and equipment are physically safe and suited to the task.							
Provide adequate refrigeration options and keep fridges clean.							
Make sure bathrooms are cleaned regularly and have adequate toilet paper, handtowel, air freshener, hand sanitiser and sanitary disposal units.							
Do a first aid risk assessment to check adequate first aid supplies and facilities are available, including access arrangements for emergency services.							
Provide training and operating procedures for the use of equipment and undertake regular inspection and maintenance. Consider electrical hazards for all work areas. Use a compliant system for the management of faulty, non-operational or decommissioned equipment.							
Give easy access to water and encourage employees to keep bottles topped up while at their desk or onsite. Consider providing cups or water bottles to staff.							
Where chemicals are used for operations, consider the requirements for chemical registers (including safety data sheets), risk assessments, safe use, PPE, labelling, storage, decanting, spill clean kits, ventilation, eye wash units, showers, signage and emergency plans.							



## Vehicles, buildings and structures

Assess and maintain vehicles, buildings and structures. Policies and systems should be accessible and practical.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Consider the accessibility of your work locations for employees or clients with a disability. Assess risk at entry and exit points (day and night), including lighting and weather.							
Make sure all locations have a compliant emergency plan and qualified people to manage emergency situations. Complete a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for anyone who may need assistance during an evacuation.							
Make emergency equipment, such as fire protection equipment and systems, part of a regular inspection and maintenance program.							
Regularly inspect security equipment. Put staff protection arrangements in place when required and re-assess regularly.							
When doing a WHS risk assessment of a work area and surrounds, consider any risks associated with the operations of an adjacent business.							
Do a risk assessment for all activities undertaken on a worksite, including any health and wellbeing activities, so that any hazards are considered. Consider first aid representation for relevant activities.							
Do a risk assessment for the operation of plant, equipment and vehicles, including parking and storage locations. Regularly review any signage and other risk control measures so they are adequate.							
Where hazardous chemicals are used, a chemical register (including safety data sheets) and/or manifest must be readily available for the information of emergency services personnel.							



# Tools and resources

## Templates

- » How to build a healthier work team
- » Healthier Work achievement/plan template
- » Healthier Work Gap Assessment Survey
- » Health and Wellbeing Policy Template

## Helpful resources

Find resources and information relating to workplace health, safety and wellbeing recommended by Healthier Work. Use the Resource Finder or go directly to resources relating to workplace categories.

- » **Resource Finder** – search for resources by topic, subtopic, type and industry
- » **Work Design** – Recommended resources that address Work Design
- » **Work Environment** - Recommended resources that address the Work Environment
- » **Workforce Capability** - Recommended resources that address Workforce Capability
- » **Workplace Engagement** - Recommended resources that address Workplace Engagement
- » **Workplace Support** - Recommended resources that address Workplace Support
- » **Workplace leadership** - Recommended resources that address Workplace Leadership
- » **Healthier Work Booklet** - Learn more about the Healthier Work program

## Get help

The Healthier Work Program is a free ACT Government initiative for Canberra businesses. Get in touch to ask a question or organise a free site visit from our Healthier Work team.

## All category worksheets in this series

					
Work Design	<b>Work Environment</b>	Workforce Capability	Workplace Engagement	Workplace Support	Workplace Leadership







Healthier Places.  
Healthier People.  
Healthier Work.



**Healthier  
Work.**

For further assistance, please  
contact the Healthier Work team.

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ACT 2601 or email: [healthierwork@act.gov.au](mailto:healthierwork@act.gov.au)  
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