



RISK ASSESSMENT FOR PRESSURE MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

NERC has an obligation to manage pressure on its workforce. This Procedure covers one specific aspect of pressure management and will form part of an overall NERC policy on Pressure Management.

Risk assessment is a fundamental part of any safety management system. This Procedure covers when and how to conduct risk assessment to identify existing or likely stress on staff. Risk assessment must always lead to the identification and implementation of risk management. This Procedure identifies how risk management is put in place, implemented, measured and reviewed but it does not cover risk management methodologies. These will be covered in the broader policy document.

All stress, or suspected stress, must be recorded together with a management plan to deal with the issues

- **Risk assessment for stress**
- **Risk management for stress**

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NOTE: This Procedure forms one part of the NERC policy on pressure management and is being published separately pending the production of the full policy.

Acknowledgements: The methodology was developed in CEH by Steve Marshall.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

“Anything which does not destroy me makes me stronger” Nietzsche

Pressure is a continuum from the very positive pressure of challenge which encourages personal development to the very negative pressure of stress which is entirely destructive. Pressure management is used here instead of “stress management” to emphasise this continuum and to focus policy on the avoidance of negative pressure. As a research organisation we should be challenging boundaries and individuals; we should be trying to make ourselves and our staff ‘stronger’. However, we have both a moral and legal obligation not to ‘destroy’ people in the process.

NERC is developing an overall policy on Pressure Management which will consist of a toolkit of many and varied approaches and processes. The reason for the variety is the range of responses between people; what is a challenge for one person might be a stress to another. This variation is not a distinction between weak and strong characters. Whether something is viewed positively or negatively by an individual depends on a whole range of factors most of which are not simply personality traits. We might see something positively at one stage in our life and negatively at another because our perspective changes. Factors completely separate from the specific issue (health, bereavement, concern about children, changes in work patterns, changes in management, moving house etc.) can change our outlook positively or negatively. It is a mistake to think that some people are inherently ‘stressed’ or anxious and others will always cope. We are all liable to stress and most of us will experience it at some stage of our lives, often when we least expect it.

There is a legal obligation for organisations to manage pressure to avoid stressing their workforce. This comes in general terms from the [Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations \(1999\)](#) and in specific terms from guidance produced by HSE ([The Management Standards for Stress](#)):

[<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/standards.htm> and [Appendix I](#)]

This Procedure deals with a single aspect of pressure management – the generation and use of risk assessment. This is being released in advance of the full policy because there has been considerable confusion on about requirements for stress risk assessment and about the form it should take.

Management involvement All levels of management have responsibilities under the law to manage pressure and avoid stress. The specific responsibility for risk assessment rests with:

- senior managers to ensure that it is undertaken, monitored and reviewed
- middle managers to operate the risk management it identifies on a day-to-day basis
- staff to cooperate and contribute to its generation and implementation.

The general guidance on risk assessment already approved within NERC applies to this area. Risk assessment is a cooperative process which can only be effective as part of an overall safety management system. NERC uses [Successful Health & Safety Management \(HSG65; 1997\)](#) as its safety management system

Personnel departments also have a responsibility to monitor and report stress situations and ensure that any problems encountered are robustly managed.

Identification of stress in individuals and groups All line managers should be aware of the issue of stress and should be alert to signs of stress in their staff. The full policy will give guidance on how to do this. In the interim, line managers should seek advice from full-time or local safety advisers or from the welfare advisers if they suspect that staff members are stressed.

Risk assessment of the present or likely stress levels of all individuals is neither practical nor required under this Procedure. However, the guidance from HSE should be used by line managers to inform themselves on the areas of work-life which are more likely to lead to stress. If they suspect or know that staff under their management are stressed, they must instigate management of the situation.

The level of organisational risk assessment for stress Under ‘normal’ situations, all areas of NERC should have stress risk assessment in place covering the over-arching nature of the

work in the Research or Collaborative Centre. This would identify those specific work areas where stress is more likely to arise. The assessment should be considered at Executive Board level and should be reviewed overall annually. Specific areas identified as stress hotspots should be reviewed more regularly (say monthly) until issues are resolved.

Under specific situations (mainly major change), specific focused risk assessment should be conducted and regularly reviewed. Each area of concern should have risk management methods identified together with milestones/benchmarks which have specified timescales. Regular review of the situation should take place at all Executive Board meetings.

The process of risk assessment for stressors

Each of the areas identified in the HSE guidance (Appendix I) should be considered in the local context. These main heading are:

- demands
- control
- support
- relationships
- role
- change

If the risk assessment is being conducted because of a specific change scenario, the particular likely personal stressors should be identified.

A first draft list of issues under each heading should be generated by management/advisers, usually there would be a small group who would take on this task consisting of personnel/welfare/H&S staff and representation from Trades Union(s). A single person should be designated as Project Leader. Each issue is scored (high, medium or low).

Against each issue where high or medium scores are recorded, risk management methods should be identified.

The next, and crucial, step is consultation. This validates both the issue identification and the scores allocated. It is highly probable that different perceptions of the scores will emerge. These different perceptions must not be dismissed or discarded in favour of a single (or management) perception. Split scores for different groups, sites etc. should be recorded.

The risk management methods should also be scored for likely effectiveness at the beginning of the process and actual effectiveness as the risk management proceeds. Rating scores will, therefore, change over time. Each version of the consultation should be retained and all versions consulted in reviews to assess whether the management of stress is proving effective.

This consultation process is best conducted through 'focus groups' which should be as representative as possible of all staff views. Numbers and constitution of the focus groups should reflect the structure of the Research Centre (sites, disciplines etc.).

Number and frequency of the iterations in the risk assessment/risk management process should reflect the degree of concern and the timetable of the change.

Honesty and open-mindedness are a prerequisite for effective risk management for stress

Properly conducted, the risk assessment/risk management process will be both a record of what is planned/happening and a tool for management of the situation.

This is best illustrated by an example and one is presented in Appendix II.

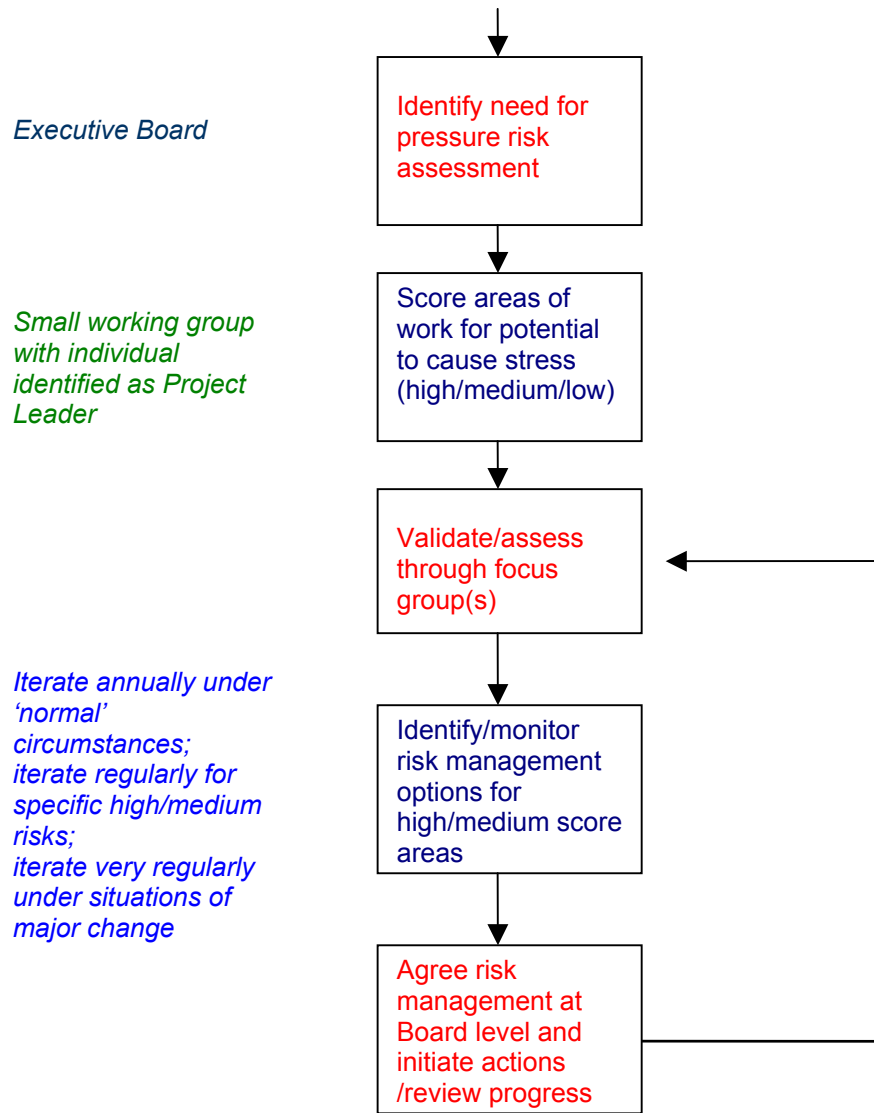
Authorisation. The Director and Executive Board should take ownership of risk assessment and risk management for stress. They should decide when specific focussed risk assessment is appropriate.

Advice/competent persons. Advice can be sought from within the organisation (NERC and local Welfare and Safety Advisers). Under conditions of major change, or for specific issues identified under initial risk assessment, outside expertise should be considered. Advice on who to consult from outside NERC is available from the advisers already mentioned and through Corporate Personnel.

Record actions. All incidents of suspected or proven stress should be fully documented and a management plan recorded. Reviews should also be documented.

Encourage and monitor feedback. Pressure management is an area where feedback is an absolute essential for effective control. Risk assessment must never be carried out by management in isolation from staff because the perception of where an organisation is on the pressure continuum will differ significantly between individuals and groups. All perceptions and viewpoints must be included for an objective view of both the problem and its solution.

SYSTEM DIAGRAM



WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG? – probable sources of system and individual failure

Management:

Change 'blindness' Management is enthusiastic for change or change is forced on it by circumstances. There is a tendency to see any views on the impact of the change as 'negative' or reactionary. **Remedy** – However much the change is beneficial or necessary, all change impacts on people. Accept that there will be opposition, fear of the consequences etc. and that these are normal, not negative, reactions. Be open-minded about the effects of change on individuals and sympathetic to their views. Manage the situation, don't simply force it.

Stress blindness Some senior managers see themselves as most susceptible to stress because they have the most responsibility. 'If I can take it, everybody else can too.' **Remedy** – This view is the exact opposite to the truth. Research shows that senior management are usually the least stressed personnel in any organisation. Stress is significantly influenced by the sense of how much control people have. Senior managers have much more control than others and, therefore, tend to be less stressed. Take a realistic view of the situation of all staff.

The 'pull yourself together' approach to stress There is a tendency for some people to see stress as 'self indulgence' or 'self pity' on the part of the sufferer. **Remedy** – Recognise stress as an often serious condition which can have severe medical effects and requires proper treatment, as would any other medical condition.

Fear of stress Along with mental illness, many managers are uncomfortable with their capacity to deal with stress. Handling upset people seems to be outside their remit or their expertise. **Remedy** – If you can't deal with this aspect of management, find help from those who are trained/competent to do so. However, you must play a part in the process and can't simply hand it over to others. If you need advice on how to handle such situations, consult welfare staff, safety advisers or ask for training.

MAKE SURE THE MESSAGE IS CONVINCING, CONSISTENT AND ENFORCED

Staff:

Denial Sufferers of stress frequently fail to see it coming and fail to see it develop. There is also a tendency to see stress as 'failure' or to think that management see it that way. **Remedy** – Talk to someone at an early stage (welfare, occupational health providers, your GP, friends or colleagues, family etc.) and continue to talk. Be reassured that NERC management take the issue seriously. If you find problems with your local or line management, take the issues higher.

APPENDIX I: The HSE Management Standards for Stress

Demands

Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Control

How much say the person has in the way they do their work

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

Support

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Relationship

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

Role

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

Change

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes;
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

APPENDIX II: EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
Work related stress (change) risk assessment

1. Responsible Manager:	Pat Nuttall	2. Date:	18th May 2006	3. Advisors	Jaqui Dingle Steve Marshall Richard Williams Jessica Winder Keith Rodgers
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5. CEH Site:	6. Affected Parties	7. Last review date
All sites	All CEH staff	18 th April 2006

8. Current and potential stressors identified (using HSE guidance)		9. Current Status Present stressor identified (High, Med, Low) or potential
CEH business plan and organisational change stressors		
1.	Demands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Additional workloads brought about from the changes at CEH ii. Change to work environment and culture at CEH iii. New roles and responsibilities (re-training, new skills to learn) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Med ii. Med iii. Med
2.	Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Lack of control of your future situation within CEH ii. Uncertainty of how much input you will have with the transition and integration process iii. Uncertain whether your present contribution will have relevance and value in a future CEH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. High ii. High iii. High
3.	Support (<i>potential communication and information stressors</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. If communication and information is not delivered clearly and effectively it could lead to miss interpretation which can then create damaging rumours. ii. Poor feedback mechanism (up and down the chain) on progress of the transition and integration process. iii. Lack of response to 'negative feedback' on ineffectiveness of support measures for the changes at CEH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Potential ii. Potential iii. Potential
4.	Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Breakdown of trust and loyalty within the organisation (systemic) ii. Breakdown of relationship between staff and their managers iii. Uncertainty of how to deal with inappropriate behaviour in the current situation and what level of tolerance to apply. iv. Uncertainty on how to proceed regarding specific personnel issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Potential ii. Potential iii. Potential iv. Med
5.	Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Uncertainty of what areas and level of science will continue ii. Uncertainty as to what post or role staff will have in the change period and in the future CEH iii. Changes in line management and senior management iv. Changes in group structure creating uncertainty in future role v. Creation of ill-defined or conflicting roles and responsibilities during the change period and in the future CEH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. High ii. High iii. Med iv. Med v. Potential

6.	<p>Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Restriction on communication within the organisation during consultation and council decision periods has left staff feeling isolated and ill-informed (i.e. a negative view of the process so far). ii. Difficulty in providing a clear and detailed timetable for transition and integration iii. Staff involvement/consultation with the transition and integration process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. High ii. Med iii. Potential
What this means to staff (The personal stressors)		
1.	Career uncertainty	High
2.	Threat to job security	High
3.	Constrained participation in decision making	Med
4.	Sudden bad news	Low
5.	Shock of scale of news	Low
6.	Uncertainty as to where relocation will be	Med
7.	Impact on family members of relocation/redundancy	High
8.	Working alongside colleagues who have more uncertainty in their future role	Potential
9.		

10. Existing control measures to combat stressors identified		Action Plan Schedule
Organisational and communication support measures for the CEH business plan (Change)		Give details of dates and those responsible for implementation
1.	Monthly intranet information bulletins	Every month
2.	Planned site visits by EB members, and CEH Personnel staff during April, May and June including offering/arranging Section, group and personal 1 to 1 level meetings.	As explained on the intranet
3.	Consultation with science colleges about implementation of the CEH business plan	
4	The creation of the Transition and Integration Management Team and Steering Groups to manage and implement the CEH business plan	Graham Leeks Structure and details on the intranet
General control and support measures identified generically for all staff		
5.	Trade Union negotiation group chaired by Director People & Skills, NERC	
6.	Normal responsibilities and role of the line manager	All line managers
7.	Usual channels to access management to talk about issues	All
8.	Question and Answer contact for all personnel queries	Personnel
9.	Support from Welfare Services	Site Welfare Officers
10.	Information packs following December and March site presentations	Completed
11.	Introductory sessions and career decision support from DBM in 1:1s and Workshops during March-May 06	DBM
12.	Appraisal process and forward job plan review	NERC Process in place
13.	Monthly monitoring of sick leave & absenteeism	CEH Personnel
14.	Stress Risk Assessment and advisory groups	CEH Health & Safety Adviser
15.	Occupational Health service	Local personnel officer and safety advisers to liaise
16.	NERC Policies & guidance	Available on the NERC Extranet
Specific control and support measures identified for Senior managers (Group Heads and above)		
17.	Section head workshops including stress management	April/October 2005
18.	Coaching from CMC or DBM consultants on change management for EB members	Completed
Specific control and support measures identified for line managers (band 5 and below)		
19.	Managing Change Workshops in February and March for Section Heads and group leaders	Completed
Specific control and support measures identified for staff who choose to take voluntary redundancy		
20.	Outplacement support from DBM	DBM
Specific control and support measures identified for staff who choose to take early retirement		
21.	Outplacement support from DBM	DBM
22.	Early retirement courses for those wishing to retire from work	CEH Personnel
Specific control and support measures identified for staff where redundancy is compulsory		
23.	Outplacement support from DBM	DBM

Specific control and support measure for staff who are relocating to another site		
24.	Personnel Section support from relocation manager and officer	Personnel
25.	Support and services from CARTUS (NERC Relocation company)	Personnel
Specific control and support measures identified for staff whose role is changing		
26.	Line management support	Line managers
27.	Welfare support	Local welfare officers
Specific control and support measure identified for staff who indicate they would like to leave but find the organisation still requires their services		
28.	Line management support	Line managers
29.	Welfare support	Local welfare officers

11. Approval			
Approved by	CEH Executive Board	Next review Date?	After local focus groups have been completed (expect to complete process by end July 2006)
		Date	18/05/06

