

M9-EN.9 PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS OF OCCUPATIONAL RISK

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Short description of the chapter

The chapter covers and analyses the main psychosocial risk factors that hotel and restaurant staff are frequently exposed to. This chapter also gives the analysis of the negative effect enhanced by improper work conditions, bad work organization and stressful atmosphere affecting the health of employees.

Goals of this chapter:

- Emphasize the typical psychosocial risk factors, violence and stress experienced by **restaurant waiting staff** (barmen, waiters) and **kitchen staff** (chefs, chef assistants)
- Analyze the organization of work and rest time
- Discuss work conditions of pregnant women and young mothers
- Analyze the requirements for the employer when hiring employees for temporary work
- Present preventive measures for psychosocial risk factors

The information presented in this chapter will help the managers of an enterprise to determine psychosocial risk factors in hotel and restaurant sector, to evaluate the situation individually and, on the basis of given recommendations, to take appropriate preventive measures to reduce the risk.

M9-EN.9.1 Work conditions, requirements and organization of work

Remuneration alone does not guarantee efficient performance of employees in a new workplace. There are five factors the implementation of which ensures much more efficient work results of the employee:

- **Comfortable workplace** - An employee must feel comfortable and safe in his workplace in order to be able to concentrate on his job
- **Pleasant work** - An employee must do the work that he likes and that he was hired for. Otherwise the employee as well as the employer may be dissatisfied; there will be no expected results and the employer will find himself in the initial situation: search for a new employee, new training, new expenses

- **Enthusiasm** - An employee must regularly get new, more complicated tasks requiring more responsibility and skills. Otherwise, however pleasant the work is, it may cause boredom resulting in reduced efficiency of employee's work
- **Adequate workload** - Workload should not exceed employee's abilities. Otherwise, the employee will overstrain physically as well as mentally, which will result in reduced efficiency of work
- **Relations among the staff members** - Employee's work efficiency much depends on the interrelations of staff, also on employer-employee relations. If employer-employee relations are based on fear rather than respect, if colleagues slander each other secretly, if there is an unhealthy competition among colleagues, then work relations develop into a mutual war, wasting the energy for conflicts, not for work.

M9-EN.9.2 Violence and harassment

According to the results of studies carried out by the European Union, 4% of employees have experienced violence at work. Violence is more frequent in enterprises the activity of which is related to big values (banks, chemist's). However, recently a tendency of violence to move into other types of enterprises has been observed, particularly into the service sector (e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers, restaurant and bar employees, etc.).

The following should be considered during the assessment of this occupational risk factor:

- Whether employees experience external violence at their workplace
 - External violence at work** is understood as offence, threatening, physical and psychological aggression directed to the employee by persons not working in this enterprise (e.g., customers, clients, etc.) and exposing his health, safety or welfare to risk. Violence may also be racist or sexual
- Whether the employee's work involves cash and/or valuable items
- Whether the employee works alone
- Whether security of employees and clients is ensured, whether security service is available
- Whether the employee deals with clients that may be potentially aggressive as a result of intoxication by alcohol or drugs
- Whether there is sufficient number of employees able to service all customers
- Whether there is sufficient number of employees serving other branches of the enterprise

In each case, the outcomes of violence are individual, depending on the circumstances under which the violence occurred, also on personal human qualifications. The outcomes of violence are manifested by:

- Reduced motivation and work satisfaction
- Stress

- Physical and sociological damage resulting in the development of different fears and phobias
- Increased absenteeism
- Deteriorated work relations
- Hiring problems

Preventive factors reducing violence risk:

- Work environment
- Work organization
- Training and instructing of employees

Violence prevention is developed in two levels:

1. seeking to avoid acts of violence or reduce them in number
2. giving necessary help and assistance to a person who is a victim of an act of violence

M9-EN.9.3 – Stress at work

Stress (##17##) at work is the second most frequent health problem related to work. Stress at work may result from:

- Psychological factors (work organization and management, i.e. high requirements for work and insufficient work control, too big work load, work deadlines, intimidation and violence at work)
- Physical factors (unsuitable conditions of work environment, such as heat, cold, noise, work tools, etc.)

The following should be considered during the assessment of this risk factor:

- Whether employees work in proper environment
- Whether working tools used are in good condition and comfortable to use
- Whether the work is well-organized, i.e. whether the number of employees is sufficient for clients to be served
- Whether work breaks are properly organized: whether employees have enough time to have a rest and eat;
- Whether orders of clients are fulfilled quickly and exactly;
- Whether there is a possibility of conflicts with clients due to delayed or improper fulfilment of orders
- Whether employees do the work corresponding to their qualifications and abilities
- Whether employees are instructed and trained sufficiently to do the assigned work

Despite the conditions enhancing the stress, the reaction of a human body is the same:

- Increased breathing frequency
- Lack of air

- Increased or disturbed heartbeat
- Increased perspiration
- Spasms in the stomach

In the course of time, stress results in the following psychological problems:

- Mood fluctuations and depression
- Bad memory
- Inability to concentrate

Stress at work may cause depression, anxiety, nervousness, fatigue and heart diseases. This results in decreased work efficiency of employees, reduced creativity and competitiveness. [##W22##](#)

Preventive measures to reduce the risk of violence include:

- Work environment
- Work organization
- Employee training and informing

M9-EN.9.4 Organization of work and leisure time

Organization of work and leisure time of employees should be based following the Directive 2003/88/EB of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time.

The main aspects to be considered when making up work schedules would be as follows:

- Every worker is entitled to a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours per 24-hour period
- Per each seven-day period every worker is entitled to a minimum uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours time plus the 11 hours' daily rest
- Where the working day is longer than six hours, every worker is entitled to a rest break
- the average working time for each seven-day period, including overtime, should not exceed 48 hours
- Each employee is entitled to paid four-week annual leave that cannot be replaced by monetary remuneration, except for the cases when work relations are terminated
- Usual work hours of employees working nightshifts should not exceed on the average 8 hours per 24-hour period

M9-EN.9.5 Work conditions of pregnant women and women with recent childbirth

When evaluating risks in workplaces, particular attention should be paid to workplaces where pregnant women or young mothers are working.

If there is any possibility that work may be harmful for an expecting mother and/or her baby, all possible measures to eliminate the risks are to be taken.

If it is impossible to eliminate the harmful factors, the employer must improve work conditions so that the pregnant woman would not experience any effect of such factors.

If the risk factor remains after the change of work conditions, the woman must be relocated to another position in the same enterprise with the salary not less than before the relocation.

If there is no possibility to relocate the pregnant woman to another position (workplace) without any harmful effects on her or her future baby's health, the pregnant woman is to be provided with a leave until maternity leave, during which she will be paid the average monthly salary.

There is no inherent risk in nightshift work. Nevertheless, if the woman does not agree to work nightshifts and gives the certificate proving that such work would harm her safety and health, the pregnant woman is to be offered dayshift work. If it is impossible to replace nightshifts by dayshifts due to any objective reasons, the employee is entitled to a leave until the beginning of maternity leave or child care leave until the child is one year old. At the beginning of maternity leave the employee is to be paid the average monthly salary.

The most frequent risk factors possibly affecting the health of a young mother or a pregnant woman and/or the health of her baby include:

- Tasks involving lifting or bending activities
- High temperature of the work environment, lack of liquids, fatigue caused by improper temperature regime
- Standing work, heavy work load
- Hypertension caused by different stressful situations
- Bad feeling due to early working hours
- Bad feeling caused by different smells
- Possibility to slip, particularly in the last decades of pregnancy

The following should be implemented to prevent the above-mentioned risk factors:

- Ensure that the woman's work does not require big physical efforts. The woman perform only easy tasks
- Ensure regular breaks and possibility to have a drink
- Ensure that the woman could have short breaks to sit down and have a rest
- Provide the woman with flexible work schedule and suitable workplace
- Clean spillages immediately and ensure appropriate footwear is worn

M9-EN.9.6 Staff employed on temporary or seasonal contracts

In hotel and restaurant sector employees are often hired for temporary or seasonal job.

Due to their incompetence and insufficient training such employees face are exposed to increased risk.

The main requirement ensuring the safety and health of employees hired under temporarily contracts is the same level of instructing and training as that applied for employees hired for permanent work.

M9-EN.9.7 Self-assessment test

Having analysed the information above name the psychological risk factors that people working in hotel and restaurant sector are exposed to.

Try to list preventive measures to eliminate or minimize such risk.

Fill in the form given below using the template. You can check your knowledge: **##D13##**.

Psychological risk factors		Employee	Harm	Essential safety measures
Activity/source	Hazard description			