

Why Risk Assessment and Climate Measurement Are Essential for Psychosocial Safety

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ABSTRACT

The modern workplace has changed dramatically in recent years with an increased emphasis on the psychological well-being of employees. While adhering to a certain standard of psychosocial safety at work is now not only a moral, but legal obligation in Australia, it begs the question: how can organisations begin to ensure psychosocial safety? A positive psychosocial safety climate is one where employees feel they are psychologically safe, feel supported in their work and are not exposed to work-related stressors that can negatively affect their mental health. Such a climate can help boost productivity and create a more positive working environment. This presentation will provide a two-pronged approach to understanding and managing psychosocial safety: pairing a traditional risk assessment with climate measurement. Risk assessments can provide several benefits, including identifying and characterising work-related hazards, identifying the nature and severity of the risks to employees, and prioritising necessary interventions for reducing or preventing psychosocial harm in the workplace. However, these assessments can have certain limitations, especially when it comes to capturing some of the less obvious causes of psychosocial harm. Climate measurement can provide valuable insights into employees' perceptions of the workplace environment, identify areas of concern that may not have been identified in the risk assessment, and help to guide organisational changes that will enhance employees' psychosocial wellbeing over time. It will also be argued that climate should be assessed from a broad perspective exploring general, physical, social and psychological aspects of safety climate. This presentation will explore why conducting risk assessments in conjunction with detailed climate measurements is integral to protecting the psychosocial safety of employees in the workplace. As well as demonstrate why employers should view the two approaches as complementary and interconnected. Best practice recommendations will be provided for the risk assessment, climate measurement and psychosocial interventions.