

Occupational Health Procedure

INTRODUCTION

This Occupational Health Procedure provides an overview of Occupational Health Management at Charles Darwin University (CDU). A number of associated procedures will provide additional detail and guidance on specific health topics.

COMPLIANCE

This is a compliance requirement under the:

- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2016
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2017
- Return to Work Act 2016 (NT)
- Return to Work Regulation 2016 (NT)
- Model Code of Practice – Hazardous Manual Tasks
- Model Code of Practice - First Aid in the Workplace
- Model Code of Practice - How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks
- Model Code of Practice – Managing the Work Environment and Facilities

INTENT

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a framework to facilitate the provision of a “safe place of work” through the identification and mitigation of potential Health Risks to Charles Darwin University (CDU) employees.

Occupational Health encompasses a broad range of activities, based on the inherent requirements of the job and include:

- Fitness for Work (fatigue, stress, medicals, medical surveillance)
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Injury and Illness Rehabilitation (Workers Compensation and Return to Work)
- First Aid Management
- Occupational Hygiene Monitoring and control programs
- Hazardous Manual Tasks
- Working in Heat
- Business Travel
- Occupational Vaccine
- Provision and Maintenance of adequate Amenities and Facilities
- Epidemic / Pandemic
- Accommodation Facilities
- Catering Services
- Health Promotion, Lifestyle and Wellness
- Smoking Policy

RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

In the context of this document

Musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) means an injury to, or a disease of, the musculoskeletal system, whether occurring suddenly (damage caused by strenuous activity, or unexpected movements) or over time (gradual wear and tear caused by repeated or continuous use of the same body parts, including static body positions), or a combination of these mechanisms, for example, body tissue that has been weakened by cumulative damage may be vulnerable to sudden injury by lower forces.

PROCEDURES

Responsibilities

VC, PVC's, Managers' all Departments

- Ensure compliance and effective implementation of the requirements of this Procedure
- Provide adequate resources for the effective implementation of this Procedure
- Incorporate Health Risks, and their controls into their risk processes and registers

Line Managers / Supervisors

- Adequately identify, assess and control the health risks associated with their Scope of Work / Activities, evaluate controls to ensure effectiveness
- Provide appropriate resources to address risks identified, and ensure compliance to this Plan
- Provide adequate and accessible First Aid Facilities
- Conduct relevant workplace monitoring, inspections and audits
- Ensure that the development of pre-task risk assessments includes consideration of potential health risks, both short and long term

Safety, Emergency and Wellbeing

- Provide advice and support to CDU Management as required

All Employees

- Participate and cooperate in occupational health requirements e.g. workplace monitoring, medical surveillance
- Consider health hazards in pre-task risk assessments
- Report any workplace health concerns to their line manager / supervisor

Training and Competence Requirements

CDU employees will be made aware of job specific occupational health in the workplace through inductions and ongoing training as required.

Injury Management, Workers Compensation and Return to Work

CDU is legislatively required to comply to the requirements of the *Return to Work Act 2016 (NT)* and *Return to Work Regulation 2016 (NT)* that applies to work related injuries and illnesses.

CDU encourages early return to full employment as soon as practicable following an injury or illness for both work related and non-work related injuries and illnesses. Where possible and appropriate, CDU provides medically suitable duties by altering the type, duration, frequency, intensity and complexity of work tasks and may be able to alter daily and weekly hours as required for a period of time during the employee's injury / illness recovery.

CDU has an Injury Management, Workers Compensation and Return to Work Procedure that outlines the processes to be followed for both work related and non-work related injuries and illnesses.

Employee Assistance Program

CDU recognises that employees may encounter stressors whilst in their employ, that may be work or non-work related. CDU has provided their employees with a limited number of counselling sessions through the CDU appointed service provider. More information can be found on the CDU Web.

Fitness for Work

CDU strives to determine that employees are medically suitable to meet the inherent requirements of their job role.

This may include pre-employment questionnaires and medicals, routine medicals, job specific medicals (e.g. driving, plant operators, diving, respirator wearers and heights), pre-international travel medicals (including vaccines, etc.), health surveillance (hearing, respiratory function, lead, arsenic, chromium, etc.) and exit medicals.

Fitness for work also includes consideration for fatigue management, alcohol and other drugs in the workplace and stress management.

Further information can be found in the Fitness for Work Procedure and Fatigue Management Procedure.

Hazardous Manual Tasks

Manual tasks cover a wide range of activities including classroom teaching, operating plant, grounds maintenance, mechanical maintenance, office / computer work, workshop activities.

Some manual tasks can be hazardous and may cause musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), if not appropriately managed. MSD may include conditions such as:

- sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments and tendons
- back injuries, including damage to the muscles, tendons, ligaments, spinal discs, nerves, joints and bones
- joint and bone injuries or degeneration, including injuries to the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, ankle, hands and feet
- nerve injuries or compression (e.g. carpal tunnel syndrome)
- muscular and vascular disorders as a result of hand-arm vibration
- soft tissue hernias
- chronic pain

Hazardous Manual Task Characteristics

These are tasks that require a person to perform tasks involving one or more of the following:

- repetitive (>2 /minute) or sustained force
- high or sudden force
- repetitive movement

- sustained or awkward posture
- exposure to vibration
- tasks that involve more than one of these risk factors will increase the risk of MSD significantly

Note

- working in hot, humid environments / handling of wet or damp objects may require increased force / increased perspiration may cause loads to slip adding sudden or unexpected forces
- low or high levels of lighting, glare and reflection may lead to awkward or sustained postures to either improve vision or avoid glare

Risk Assessment

In conducting a risk assessment for manual tasks that have been identified as hazardous consider sources of risk including

- work design and layout
- the nature, size, weight and number of things handled in performing the manual task
- systems of work (includes tools that are unsuitable for the task, work methods / processes)
- the environment in which the task is performed

Note – Workers will have differing physical and psychological characteristics and these individual factors may increase the risk e.g. skills and experience, physical characteristics, un-accustomed work

Things to look out for include:

- any changes that have resulted in new manual tasks or a changed environment
- tasks involving tools, machinery or equipment that do not work properly or are difficult to use
- if workers have made improvisations to tasks to avoid discomfort

Workstation Design

Workstations should be designed to allow workers to work in an upright position, shoulders in a natural position (not elevated) and upper arms close to the trunk most of the time without large reaches to perform the task/s. Work surfaces should be adjustable to suit a range of workers and the tasks they perform.

Where possible, place items used in manual tasks so they are:

- in front of the worker
- between waist and shoulder height
- close to the midline of workers and orientated towards the worker
- on the worker's preferred side
- positioned within comfortable reaching distance
- positioned to avoid double handling and to avoid moving loads manually over long distances

Working Position

Workers should not remain in a seated, standing or otherwise static posture for prolonged periods. Design the workstation to provide opportunities for workers performing seated or standing tasks to vary their postures and movements.

Work Space

Work areas should have enough space to accommodate the number of workers and other people involved in the task/s, any equipment that might be required and space to operate the equipment safely.

Further information and guidance can be found in the Hazardous Manual Tasks Procedure and Workstation Ergonomics Program.

Working in Heat

CDU conducts a large variety of activities across a large variety of seasonal environmental and weather conditions, both nationally and internationally. Adequate risk management of is required to mitigate the potential risk of heat illness.

Heat illnesses occurs when heat produced by the body (work activity, illness, etc.), and that absorbed from the environment (air temperature, humidity, air movement, radiant heat), exceed the body's ability to disperse this heat. As a result, core body temperature rises above normal limits, and the individual begins to dehydrate as they sweat in an effort to cool down. As this scenario progresses, the individual will begin to experience the signs and symptoms of heat illness. Symptoms may be mild initially, though can rapidly progress to a life-threatening condition if not recognised and treated early.

Dehydration is a major influence on fatigue (physical and mental), leading to decreased reaction times, poor decision making, stress and irritability. These symptoms along with other symptoms of heat illness (fainting, cramping, loss of dexterity and accuracy) present additional safety risks, particularly at critical times during a task.

Mitigation of the health and safety risks associated with working in heat are therefore focused on controls that work to both maintain a core body temperature within the normal range, and ensure adequate hydration of the worker.

More guidance on prevention of heat illness (risk mitigation), early recognition and emergency treatment can be found in CDU's Working in Heat Procedure.

First Aid Management

The Model Code of Practice for First Aid in the Workplace requires CDU to assess the risks in the workplace and to provide first aid processes, training and equipment to mitigate the risk as assessed.

The risks identified will vary between individual workplaces e.g. from classroom to grounds maintenance to trades training workshop to laboratories to remote work and research. As such the training requirements, communication requirements and the first aid kit numbers, locations, size and contents will vary accordingly.

The CDU First Aid Management Procedure provides further detail on the risk assessment process and things to consider when developing and implementing First Aid processes in your specific area.

International Business Travel

It is recommended that the traveller contact Health Services 6 to 8 weeks prior to international travel (where possible), to determine fitness for business travel and mitigate potential adverse health effects (advice, vaccinations, malarial medication, etc. that may be required prior to travel).

Journey planning should be considered to assist in managing jet lag, fatigue, task safety (e.g. consider alternatives to self-driving if traveller is likely to be fatigued, differing driving conditions, unfamiliar

environment, etc.). CDU has a Journey Management process for driving within Australia and a Travel Safety and Security Procedure for international business travel.

Occupational Vaccination

CDU may consider offering occupational vaccination where a risk assessment has identified an occupational exposure to a vaccine preventable disease.

Potential occupational exposure groups include, but are not limited to

- Q-Fever for farm animal workers
- First Aiders (Hepatitis B)
- Waste Water (Sewerage) and Contaminated Waste Employees (Hepatitis A)
- Business Travellers (destination dependant)

Vaccines cannot be assumed to protect 100% of recipients and all additional precautions against potential infection should be followed carefully (e.g. insect repellent, covering clothing and mosquito nets), regardless of any vaccines / oral preventatives that have been administered e.g. wear gloves, respiratory protection as indicated.

Work Environment and Facilities

Legislation requires a business will 'ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision of adequate facilities for workers, including toilets, drinking water, washing and eating facilities'.

The NT Code of Practice 'Managing the work environment and facilities', describes the requirements and provides practical guidance on how to provide and maintain a physical work environment that mitigates work health and safety risks, including the physical environment (e.g. workspace, lighting, ventilation, rubbish removal, vermin control), facilities (e.g. toilets, drinking water, washing and crib areas, change rooms, personal storage and shelter), remote or isolated work and emergency plans; and will apply to all CDU work sites. Equipment and furniture (e.g. toasters, fridges, seating) should be in good working order and include adequate replenishment of consumable items (soap, toilet paper).

Specification requirements about workplace facilities and the work environment will depend on the nature of the work, the size and location of the workplace and the number and composition of workers at the workplace.

The work environment should be suitable to the task/s (lighting, ventilation, thermal comfort, noise, work area layout) and maintained so that it remains in a clean and safe condition.

To maintain the hygiene, comfort and aesthetics of the office areas, the storage, preparation and heating of food shall take place only in the provided food preparation areas such as staff rooms, kitchens or designated facilities. There shall be no storage, cooking, preparation or heating of food or beverages in the office spaces. Therefore, there should be no requirement for fridges, microwaves or other cooking / preparation appliances for food or beverages in office areas.

Scents (such as perfumes, body sprays, deodorants, vapourising of oils, cleaning chemicals, toilet sprays) can affect not only the person using or wearing the scent, but anyone who comes into contact with them. Depending on how sensitive they are, the individual might experience symptoms such as nausea, dizziness, headache, itchy skin, hives, itchy eyes and nose, runny nose, wheezing, coughing, difficulty breathing, sore throat, difficulty with concentration, asthma or asthma-like symptoms, and strange tastes in the mouth.

Due to these potential adverse health effects, and for CDU to exercise its duty of care to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace:

- The use of oil or scent vapourises of any type, with any type of scents (natural or manmade), use of candles and incense and all like activities in office / enclosed spaces is strictly not permitted
- CDU requests that University community members are respectful to others in the thoughtful and prudent use of scents in the workplace. For example:
 - use scent free personal products in the workplace
 - identify and remove or substitute any products causing issues
 - post scent free signs, as appropriate, in your areas
 - use of scented cleaning or paint products or other chemicals at times when there is no or low occupancy of the area, and allow time for ventilation prior to return of occupants

Accommodation Operations

The accommodation facilities shall meet all relevant structural, electrical and fire requirements, have suitable sleeping quarters, appropriate facilities and facility management, adequate drinking water, lighting, heating, cooling, ventilation, cleaning and waste management.

All applicable legislation, codes and standards, as well as CDU health standards and procedures are required to be met. There should be internal processes and procedures to demonstrate compliance to manage all aspects of health and hygiene requirements for their Scope of Work.

Aspects include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency plans
- Food handling and hygiene, where applicable
- Kitchen, laundry, accommodation and other facilities management (including ventilation, lighting, heating/cooling, potable water, cleaning)
- Management and maintenance of potable water and sewerage systems
- Vector and vermin control
- Waste management
- Lifestyle issues

Where accommodation is being provided in the proximity of the workplace, the accommodation should be separated from any hazards at the workplace likely to adversely affect the health and safety of the worker using the accommodation.

Catering Services

The Catering Service Providers will be required to meet all applicable legislation, codes and standards, as well as CDU health standards and procedures. They should have internal processes and procedures to demonstrate their compliance to manage all aspects of health and hygiene requirements for their Scope of Work.

Aspects include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency plans
- Food handling and hygiene

- Kitchen, food storage and other facilities management (including ventilation, lighting, heating/cooling, potable water, cleaning)
- Vector and vermin control
- Waste management
- Lifestyle issues, including healthy eating choices and dietary information

Epidemic / Pandemic Disease

An epidemic is the occurrence of more cases of a disease than expected in a given area / specific group of people (e.g. measles, flu). A pandemic is a rapidly spreading infectious disease that may pose a global threat. Pandemics may overwhelm local health systems (e.g. SARS, swine flu).

CDU will coordinate with Northern Territory and Federal Government agencies, and follow advice in determining and implementing specific response measures to each epidemic / pandemic situation, as required.

CDU will utilise current systems (e.g. Business Continuity Planning, Crisis Management and communication processes) to provide clear, relevant, timely and accurate communications and actions to facilitate effective management and orderly returns to normal operations.

Health Promotion, Wellness and Lifestyle Programs

Workplace Wellness or Health Promotion Programs are a combination of educational and organisational activities designed to support healthy lifestyles. They consist of education, screening and interventions designed to change specific lifestyle behaviours, not just those at work, in order to achieve better health (e.g. smoking cessation, nutrition, and increased activity).

Benefits include a healthier and more productive workforce; lower workers compensation insurance premiums, lower employee turnover, reduced absenteeism, improved morale, stronger support for families, decreased stress and a more positive workplace.

CDU may offer Health Promotion and Wellness Programs to their workforce. Programs will be voluntary and where possible available to all employees.

Smoking

CDU is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all members of the University community and recognises its' legislative and duty of care responsibility to ensure employees, students, visitors and other members of the University community are not exposed to potentially harmful situations including the prevention of exposure to second hand smoke.

CDU's Smoke Free Policy details the position on smoking within all CDU premises.

Health Promotion awareness may be conducted as required:

- Health promotion information, education and support for Quit Smoking Programs
- Education on hand washing before any hand mouth activities such a smoking and eating – especially where there are potential adverse health impacts from workplace exposures e.g. lead, arsenic, etc.
- CDU Smoking Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality

The maintenance and confidentiality of medical records shall be maintained. Medical information should not be divulged without the consent (preferably written) of the person whom the information relates, unless that person withholds consent and there is deemed to be a safety risk in withholding that information.

In such cases, the disclosure of relevant medical information will be conducted in a professional and appropriate manner.

Information provided to Managerial and Supervisory employees pertaining to an individual's injury, illness or "fitness for duty" will be on an as required basis and generally take the form of suitable duties and restrictions within the employee's job description.

More specific medical information shall be given on a strictly "need to know" basis and with the consent of the employee (preferably written). Non-health professional employees in receipt of such information are charged with the same obligations of maintaining confidentiality of this information as are health professionals, with any requests or queries referred back to the Health Services.

Recording of Data and Reports

Reporting Requirements will be addressed based on the scope of work and assessment of potential health risks. Reporting requirements will be based on legislative requirements, government reporting / licencing requirements, providing analysis and trending to allow for efficient management of the issues and targeted remediation and training as appropriate.

Compliance and assurance

Compliance with the requirements established in this procedure will be reviewed as part of CDU's assurance activities.

Monitoring and verification of the key requirements of this procedure will also be included as part of the CDU key performance indicator reporting requirements.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Internal

- Injury Management, Workers Compensation and Return to Work Procedure
- Fitness for Work Procedure
- Fatigue Management Procedure
- Hazardous Manual Tasks Procedure
- Working in Heat Procedure
- First Aid Management Procedure
- Occupational Hygiene Procedure

External

- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2016
- Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2017
- Return to Work Act 2016 (NT)
- Return to Work Regulation 2016 (NT)
- Model Code of Practice – Hazardous Manual Tasks
- Model Code of Practice - First Aid in the Workplace
- Model Code of Practice - How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks
- Model Code of Practice – Managing the Work Environment and Facilities

Document History and Version Control

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