

HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS INDICATOR TOOL USER MANUAL

Background

HSE's Management Standards Indicator Tool is a 35-item questionnaire relating to the six primary stressors identified in the Management Standards for Work Related Stress. The items are based on the best available evidence linking work design to health outcomes. It has been designed to support the process described in the Management Standards by providing a broad indication to organisations of how well their workforce rate their performance in managing the risks associated with work related stress.

This *User Manual* provides guidance for using the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool in a survey to gather the opinion of the workforce. The HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool can be used as a standalone measuring device, or alternatively, the items can be included in another question set, such as a pre-existing staff survey. It is recommended that the HSE Management Standards Analysis Tool be used to score the responses, regardless of whether it is used as a standalone measuring device or incorporated into a wider staff survey. The results from the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool should be confirmed by discussing the findings with employees, and also by considering other data that is available within the organisation, such as sickness absence rates, employee turnover etc.

Areas covered in this User Manual include the following:

- Getting a good response rate
- Analysing the results
- Ensuring the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool is sensitive at follow-up surveys
- Indicative sampling

Additional resources are included in the Appendices including:

- An example covering letter for a staff survey
- A checklist for using the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool.

Getting a good response rate

Obtaining a high response rate is important to ensure your results are representative of the working conditions in your organisation. As a crude rule of thumb, for a survey of this nature, a response rate of over 50% could be considered adequate; over 60% desirable, over 70% good and more than 80% very good. With a response rate of less than 50%, the data cannot be considered representative, and should be treated with extreme caution

Another important factor in determining the reliability of your results is that the overall response rate is balanced across different types of worker and location. For instance, it is known that generally, much higher response rates are generally found in surveys of office-based staff than surveys of manual workers. In line with this, some additional effort may be required to encourage non-office based staff to participate in the survey.

Whether all workers in your organisation are going to be invited to participate in the survey, or whether you are selecting a representative sample of workers, you will need to be sure that you have an up to date list of workers in your organisation who are selected for the survey. The list may be the payroll list, staff records, site security records or similar source. It is important that the list of workers you use is up to date and accurate to ensure all those in your sample receive their questionnaires.

There are several things you can do to encourage a good response rate in your sample before you start your survey. Not least is that employees should feel the questionnaire is important, that their views matter and that they will be acted on. Good ways to encourage this:

- Publicise the survey within your organisation, including endorsements from senior management and employee representatives before it is distributed.
- Explain to all staff:
 - The purpose of the survey;
 - How actions will be taken to address survey findings;
 - How and when staff will be receiving a questionnaire; and
 - How and when staff will get feedback on results.
- Ensure anonymity of responses. This will encourage employees to give frank and accurate responses. A formal statement of anonymity at the beginning of the survey is the best way to do this.
- Use up-to-date and accurate records to distribute questionnaires to ensure they do not go to the wrong locations.
- Give people enough time to complete and return questionnaires.
- Ensure managers consider that the process is important and encourage their staff to take time to complete questionnaires.
- Allow staff surveys to be completed in work time. We know that this provides much better response rates.
- Have one or two reminders before the completion date.
- Indicate on the material accompanying the questionnaire when and how the results will be communicated to all staff – and honour this commitment.
- Provide appropriate instructions on completion and a contact for support for completion if required.

- Consider the best medium for distributing, and returning the survey for your staff (e.g. paper based, staff intranet). If possible, it may be useful to offer different formats so individuals can select the most convenient for them, while maintaining their anonymity.
- If possible, provide some sort of incentive for completing the survey. One strategy that has proven effective in getting good and very good response rates in large, diverse workforces, is a small donation to a named charity for every survey that is completed and returned.

An example covering letter that can accompany the questionnaire is provided in **Appendix A**.

Analysing Your Results

HSE has developed the HSE Management Standards Analysis Tool to interpret the data generated from the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool. The scores provided by the HSE Management Standards Analysis Tool are based on employee responses to HSE's HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool. It provides summary information of how you are performing against each of the Management Standards stressors. It is also colour coded for ease of understanding the results in terms of priority. The scores range from 1 (poor) to 5 (desirable). The information is presented in the form of bar charts providing:

- Your organisation's score on each of the six Management Standards areas;
- A suggested interim target in each of the six areas, based on where you are now; and
- An aspirational benchmark that is based on the average score of the top 20% of the responses of employees to a national household survey using the Management Standards. The employees assessed the performance of their organisations in tackling the sources of work-related stress. This provides an overarching aim is to get organisations to where these top 20% are now.

You can use your data in a number of ways to compare your performance:

- Against previous survey(s) you have undertaken, with the aim of measuring progress;
- Across different parts of your organisation, with a view to identifying good parts that may have practices that would be beneficial for other parts to adopt; and
- Against the national picture, to provide some context against which to judge your performance and to set achievable organisational goals.

The intention is that all the data you collect can be used to promote a system of continuous improvement. It is important to appreciate that the results of the survey alone can only provide an indication of performance in managing work-related stress, and you will need to share and discuss the outcomes of the survey with employees, and explore any issues raised in more detail, for example in focus groups.

Absence data and turnover are two other important indications of the prevalence of work-related stress in your organisation. Also, you should consider the *states-to-be-achieved* on each of the six Management Standards; these clearly proclaim what should be happening in your organisation towards effective management of the potentials of work-related stress.

Selecting a Sample

Ideally, a whole population of an organisation should have a say in a staff survey. Where this cannot take place, it is possible to get an indication of the situation if the sample is representative of the whole. There are two critical issues to consider in selecting a survey population that is representative:

1. How many workers do you need to sample; and
2. The method of select the sample of workers

Recommended minimum sample size

A survey including all your workers will always provide a more precise picture than a sample. The advantages of conducting a survey among the smallest recommended sample size is that it keeps costs to a minimum, and also reduces the staff time that is required. The minimum sample sizes have been calculated to ensure that the survey findings will give a statistically representative picture of the views of all staff in your organisation.

The advantages of using a larger sample size include the possibility of more detailed sub-group analysis (e.g. by occupational group) and give more of your staff the opportunity to give their opinions. The disadvantages of this are greater costs in terms of resources and time.

Recommended minimum sample sizes are given in the table below.

Total number of workers	Recommended minimum sample size ¹ to provide data accurate to at least $\pm 5\%$ ²
500 or fewer	All Workers
501-1000	500
1001-2000	650
2001-3000	700
Over 3000	800

¹ Assumes a response rate of 50%

² Relates to \pm percentage of the score

How to select a sample of workers

If you are selecting a sample of workers, it is important that these are selected at random from your list of all workers. Random sampling provides a statistically valid way to gather data. It allows you to take results from the sample and use them as a best estimate of what represents the views of the whole workforce.

By far the quickest way to select a random sample of workers is to use a spreadsheet software package:

1. Export your list or copy and paste it into a spreadsheet program, if it is not already in one.
2. If you are planning subgroup analyses, then you should also include details such as occupation, staff group etc. as well as workers names.
3. In an adjacent blank column create a list of random numbers using the functions of the spreadsheet package or other means.
4. Sort the whole list on these random numbers and take the cases ordered sequentially from the top or the bottom as your sample.

It is also possible to do your random selection manually:

1. Number your list of workers sequentially e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc.
2. Generate a set of random numbers equal to your desired sample size. These numbers will be in the range **1** and **your total number of workers**. E.g. If you have 2000 workers you need to generate a list of 650 random numbers between 1 and 2000. This list of random numbers can be acquired from a spreadsheet program, from statistical tables or via the Internet where there are several sites available that generate random numbers.
3. Manually select, from your list of workers numbers those that correspond to the random numbers generated. These are your *sample population* to whom you send your questionnaire.

Appendix A

Example of a covering letter to be sent to employees with the questionnaire

[It is recommended that you send the covering letter out to a named individual on appropriately headed/official paper. The quality and professionalism of the covering letter has been shown to have an effect on response rates.]

Company name
Company address
Date

Dear [employee's name],

[Name of company] are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that work-related stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of tackling the causes of stress in our workplace.

The attached questionnaire consists of 35 simple one-line questions, and some basic items about the type of your work. We do not ask for any information that would identify you. The survey is designed to find out how you feel about various aspects of working conditions here. We are asking you and your colleagues to do this now to be sure that we are doing all we can to make this a good place to work. Please read the instructions carefully, and complete your questionnaire as soon as you can.

When the questionnaires have been returned and analysed, the outcomes will be shared with employees and employee representatives. The next stage in the process will be to organise employee groups to discuss and confirm the results, decide what the key issues are, and reach agreement on appropriate action.

Please take the time to complete the questionnaire. It will provide an indication of how well we are performing and it will give an indication of where any problem areas might be.

<i>Your responses to this questionnaire will remain anonymous and only group data will be presented. It will not be used as an evaluation of your work or capabilities.</i>
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The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. For each question tick the box that most accurately reflects your job as it is now. **Please only tick ONE box for each question.**

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to [enter name of person or department]0. This should be by [enter return date]. If you have any questions concerning completion of the survey please contact [enter contact name/phone number].

Thank you for participating.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix B

CHECKLIST FOR USING THE HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS INDICATOR TOOL

The following checklist suggests the steps you will need to complete, and the order in which you will need to complete them, if you are using HSE's Management Standards Indicator Tool.

- Step 1: Distribute the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool** (survey questionnaire) to your employees. Include a covering letter stating where you want the questionnaire returned to and by what date. Appendix A contains an example of a covering letter that you can adapt to send with the Indicator Tool.
- Step 2: Collate your data:** Enter the data on returned questionnaires into HSE's Management Standards Analysis Tool.
- Step 3: HSE Management Standards Analysis Tool output:** this will tell you how your organisation is performing for each of the sources of stress (e.g. Demands, Control, Support etc.). Alongside your performance figure, the analysis tool will also give you a comparison figure to ultimately work towards and an interim target to enable you to continuously improve your management of work related stress.
- Step 4: Take further action:** inform staff, employee representatives and other stakeholders of the results from the Indicator Tool. At this point you will also need to be planning the arrangements for discussing the findings with staff, for example, by running focus groups.
- Step 5: Consult with your staff:** HSE recommends that you hold some focus groups to confirm the results of the Indicator Tool and explore further any topics that were highlighted as needing further action.
- Step 6: Summarise the focus groups discussions:** highlighting those issues that were of concern to the majority and the actions identified to help reduce them. Issues of concern to small groups and individuals should also be noted and addressed separately (refer to the website for guidance).
- Step 7: Feedback:** inform staff of the main outcomes of the staff consultation, detailing action plans you have drawn up to improve stress management in your workplace.
- Step 8: Review:** Conduct the process again after a suitable period of time to assess whether there have been changes / improvements.