28 APRIL 2022

World Health and Safety day 2022

Addressing Psychological Health and Safety in the workplace

ISO/TC 283
Occupational health and safety management systems

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ISO 45003:2021 – Psychological Health and Safety at Work

The ISO Technical Committee (TC) 283 for Occupational Safety and Health (OH&S) Management started down the road to create the ISO 45003 standard in September 2018. This was well before the pandemic struck or the unfortunate war in Ukraine. However, the global OH&S professional community recognized that psychological safety and health is as important, if not more so, as our physical well-being while at work.

Knowing about psychological hazards and risks can enhance an organization’s understanding and ability to recognize workers who are experiencing mental, emotional, and/or cognitive distresses that could result in harm both to themselves and fellow workers – intentional or unintentional.

Using the management systems approach provides a consistent, repeatable, and continually improving set of processes and practices that can address all types of hazards and risks to worker.

Importantly, this approach drives ongoing review and evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of a system and its components, as well as continual searches for opportunities to improve. With that, psychosocial elements of OH&S management can be regularly evaluated and updated to ensure new methods for preventing psychological, emotional, or other similar injuries from occurring, as well as developing and applying better methods to address those who experience such injuries.

The implementation of an OHSMS that effectively includes psychosocial risks requires collaboration at all levels of an organization – top management, middle management, supervisors, and non-managerial workers alike. Therefore, using the systems approach engenders the need to ensure that workers have the competence to recognize psychosocial hazards and risks, as well as to help with their mitigation.

This promotes understanding of the issues that can exist and provides a much more collaborative environment where workers can help each other, as well as avoid mental, emotional, and cognitive harm. ISO 45003, a collaboratively created standard, provides information that organizations can use to ensure an effective and collaborative approach to addressing psychosocial risks to workers, and integrated with management of all other kinds of hazards and risks.