

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY _08

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY

introduction

- ◎ Efficiency in work place is possible only when an employee is healthy on the other hand industry exposes workers to certain hazards which affect his health. The symptoms of bad health are high rate of absenteeism and turnover, industrial discontent and indiscipline, poor performance and low productivity.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF HEALTH

The W.H.O has defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Industrial health refers to a system of public health and preventive medicine which is applicable to industrial concerns.

According to the joint I.L.O/W.H.O Committee on Organisational Health, industrial health is:

- i) the prevention and maintenance of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations
- ii) prevention among workers of ill-health caused by the working conditions
- iii) Protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health, and
- iv) Placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his physical and psychological equipment.

SAFETY MEASURES

Safety measures deals with prevention of accidents and with minimizing the resulting loss and damage to persons and property. Five basic principles must govern the safety programme of an organisation. They are :

1. Factors resulting to accidents have to be traced out, analysed and eliminated.
2. Identify potential hazards, provide effective safety facilities and equipment take prompt remedial action.
3. The top management must continuously monitor the safety performance.
4. Management and supervision must be fully accountable for safety performance in the work place.
5. All employees should be given thorough training in safe methods of work and should receive continuing education and guidance on eliminating safety hazards and on prevention of accidents

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is a state of mind that show certain biochemical reactions in the human body and is projected by a sense of anxiety, tension, depression, frustration and irritation. Such reactions are caused when the demands of the environmental forces or internal forces are not met by the resources available to the person. Situations produce stress in the form of bio-chemical, functional and structural changes in the human organism. These situations could be fear, pain, fatigue, emotional arousal, humiliation, frustration, lack of

STRESS MANAGEMENT

concentration, blood pressure, drugs, loss of loved one, non-occurrence of an expected event and even unexpected successes that require a change in the operational style. High level stress damages the physical and psychological well-being of a person and extremely low levels of stress are equally undesirable for they cause boredom, and result in lack of stimulation, innovation and challenges. Thus moderate level of stress is necessary for higher level of performance.

Meaning and Definition of Stress

The term “Stress” refers to the body’s physical, mental, and chemical reactions to circumstances that confuse, endanger, frighten or irritate the individual.

- i. According to Hans Selye Stress is defined “as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand”.
- ii. Stress is a discrepancy between an employee’s perceived state and desired state, when such a discrepancy is considered important by the employee. Stress influences two behaviors -
(1) the employee’s psychological and physical well-being and
(2) the employee’s efforts to cope with the stress by preventing or reducing it.
- iii. S.P. Robbins, “Stress” is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.

Sources of Stress

There are two sources of stress namely organizational sources and personal sources.

A) Organizational Sources

The extent and ratio of stress that people experience in job place are influenced by the following factors :

i. Nature of job

The nature of job itself can determine the type and degree of stress that can be induced. Some jobs lead to more stress-related responses than others. For example job of a police officer, or air traffic controller are often considered to be low- stress jobs. In general high stress occupations are those in which the employees have little control over their operations, work under time constraints and have major responsibilities for human or financial resources.

ii. Role Ambiguity

Role is the set of activities associated with certain position in the organisation. When there is lot of uncertainty regarding job definitions or job expectations, then people experience role ambiguity. Role ambiguity is high in managerial jobs where responsibilities are more and role definitions and task specifications are not clear.

Role ambiguity produce psychological strain and dissatisfaction, lead to under-utilization of human resources and leads to feeling of futility on how to cope with the organizational environment.

iii. Role Conflict

Role conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometimes opposing expectations of a given individual. Role conflicts occur when contradictory demands are at the same time placed before an employee. For example, a building contractor may ask a carpenter to something which is different to what the city building code is, thus causing a role conflict. Similarly a father may know that his son has committed a crime but does not inform the police.

iv. Responsibilities assigned to employee's

Any type of responsibility can be a burden on an employee. Holding a person responsible for anything going wrong can create stress and it can be more if the manager has a limited degree of control over his subordinates.

v. Lack of Participation

When the employee's are allowed to participate in the decision making process of the organisation, the employee's develop high morale, work more efficiently and feel that they have control over the work environment thereby reducing the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity which are the causes of stress.

B. Personal sources

i. Job concern

Job variables can become stressors when they become sources of concern, anxiety and frustration to a individual. Lack of job security, prospect of losing a job with family depending on the individual, job recession, low status of job, lack of career progress are all factors resulting into stress.

ii. Relocation

Transfers or promotions resulting into change of place geographically, disturbs the routine daily life of individual causing stress. Fear of working in a new place, unpredictability of the new work environment, anxiety due to fear of how to create new relations, getting away from spouse, children, relatives or looking for new dwelling, school for children in new place can be the result of uncertainty and a cause of stress.

iii. Change of life structure

Structure of life and process of living has many facets like socio-cultural factors like religion, race, education, family. As a person grow older responsibilities also grow up, and therefore stress develops. The extent of stress is also determined by the ability to cope with stress