Group Stress Risk Assessment Tool

User instructions

1. Background

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Group Stress Risk Assessment Tool is:

- A 35-item survey relating to the six primary stressors identified in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Management Standards approach to tackling Work-Related Stress.
- The questions are based on the best available evidence linking work design to health outcomes.
- The Group Stress Risk Assessment Tool has been designed to gather the opinions of the workforce to provide a broad indication of how well workplaces are managing the risks associated with work related stress.
- The tool is an addition to the existing Stress Toolkit which contains guidance to prevent and manage workplace stress as well as the "Guided Conversation" individual stress risk assessment.
- The Trade Union Area Health and Safety/other Representatives should be engaged and fully involved in the process, along with any other local trade union representatives and relevant stakeholders.

2. When should the Group Stress Risk Assessment Tool be completed?

There is no set definition of when the survey should be completed, however it is recommended that the survey should be completed **whenever a need has been identified**. This could via receipt of feedback, or evidenced through available data. Sickness absence, employee engagement, grievance cases, employee retention rates and Trade Union Area Health and Safety Representatives safety inspection reports are all important indications of the prevalence of work-related stress.

It may also be agreed that as part of good practice, regular survey completion activity should take place, to assess, or reassess levels of workplace stress. For example, this could be annually, bi-annually or any other timeframe as decided is appropriate. This can be discussed at the joint Health and Safety Committee meetings.

3. Getting a good response rate

Obtaining a high response rate is important to ensure your results correctly reflect the group being surveyed.

Where the response rate is less than 50%, data should be considered as indicative only **and treated with extreme caution**.

Employees should feel confident that the survey is important, that their views matter, and that they will be acted on. Ways to encourage a good response rate:

- Explain the purpose of the survey and what it is aiming to achieve;
- Use joint communications with trade union health and safety/other reps.
- How and when staff will be receiving a survey;
- Provide completion instructions and a contact for support;
- How and when feedback will be provided on results, including how action will be taken to address findings;
- Ensure anonymity of responses. This will encourage employees to give frank and honest responses;
- Ensure all managers understand that the process is important and that they encourage employees to take time to complete a survey; and
- Provide a covering message to accompany the survey (optional - see **Appendix A**).

4. Checklist

The following checklist suggests the steps you will need to complete, and the order in which you should complete them once it has been identified that the Group Stress Risk Assessment Tool should be completed.

Step 1: Inform all relevant stakeholders, including the appropriate management team, Trade Union Area Health and Safety/other Representatives, field HR and SHE Team health and safety colleagues, who should form a working group to agree and plan activity, including who will become the survey coordinator responsible for leading activity. See **Appendix B** for an example activity plan.

It is recommended that an existing formal channel such as the Health and Safety Committee Meeting, or an ad-hoc meeting/conference call is arranged to complete this activity.

Step 2: The working group should engage with employees and introduce the activity, process and timescales. This may also include managing expectations around what is and is not in scope (job redesign for example). This activity may take place as part of a regular existing meeting such as WTLL, or ad-hoc meeting/huddle as appropriate and agreed with the survey coordinator.

Step 3: Distribute printed copies of the Group Stress Risk Assessment survey. This could be included as part of engaging with employees in **Step 2**, or via a separate meeting.

Include instruction about who surveys should be returned to and by what date (if not receiving returns via the same meeting). **Appendix A** contains an example of a covering message that you may choose to include when distributing surveys.

Step 4: Collate your data: enter the data from the completed returned surveys into the Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey Collation Tool.

Step 5: Analyse the outputs of the Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey Collation Tool: this will tell you how you are performing for each of the six sources of stress (e.g. Demands, Control, Support etc.). If you have carried out previous surveys you can enter that data to provide details of the changes in scores and see how the views of employees have changed.

Take the opportunity to compare the results with other available data e.g. sickness absence, engagement etc.

Step 6: The survey coordinator and working group should discuss the results and plan arrangements to discuss findings with employees, for example, via a regular existing meeting such as WTLL, or ad-hoc meeting/huddle as appropriate.

Step 7: The working group should share survey results with employees. Focus on those issues that were of concern to the majority and together identify actions to help reduce them.

Individual concerns should also be noted and addressed separately via the Individual Stress Risk Assessment process.

Step 8: Document employee feedback and agreed actions to improve stress management in your workplace within an action plan, with clear action owners and timescales.

Step 9: Progress actions, improve and review: Action owners are to complete action activity and through the survey coordinator and/or stakeholder working group provide regular updates to employees on progress against the action plan.

Step 10: Conduct the process again after a suitable period of time to assess whether there have been changes or improvements. This also includes revisiting data as per **Step 5** to see whether the steps taken are working.

5. Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey Collation Tool – User Instructions

The Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey Collation Tool allows you to analyse the views of those completing the survey and enables you to assess performance either by individual stressor or question by question, over a period of up to three years.

For the tool to function correctly, you should firstly save a copy to your computer.

At the bottom of the screen you will see a series of tabs. Clicking on the tabs allow you to move between different worksheets. **Do not change the names of any of the worksheets** as this will stop the tool from working properly.

A brief summary of the content of these worksheets is described below.

Raw Data

Please enter the workplace name or employee group you are surveying into **Column B**. There must be an entry for each record (row) in **Column B** – this will then allocate the record number. If you are using more than one year's results on the tool this should be the same on each year's worksheet.

Response data from completed surveys is entered individually into the Raw Data worksheet. Input values in this worksheet in **Columns N – AV**. Each column relates to a question and each row relates to a survey response.

A total of up to 10,000 individual records can be included for each year. Record numbers will be allocated automatically based on the order you input the data into the sheet. Double check that there are no blank rows in the sheet otherwise this will result in the formula allocating record numbers not functioning correctly.

Note: For results to remain anonymous, the results of **at least 10 surveys should be entered**. Entering fewer than 10 results will return no response in the 'Question by Question', 'Totals' and 'Summary of Results' page.

Last Year's Data and 2 Year's Ago Data

These have the same functions as the 'Raw Data' sheet.

It is essential that a workplace name/employee group is entered for each row in **Column B** of the worksheets to ensure that each row is allocated a record number, this should be the same workplace name/employee group as used in **Column B** of the Raw Data sheet.

Totals

This worksheet lists the number of responses and non-responses for each question. The non-zero values are displayed as a percentage for each question and as a total figure for the whole selection.

For each stressor the question with the highest percentage of '1' responses will be shown with a red background; whilst the question with the highest percentage of '5' responses will have a green background. '1' is the lowest response, so a high proportion of these suggests an area for improvement.

Any question with a non-response rate above 5% will be highlighted in red, indicating that a significant number of respondents have not answered which could affect the accuracy of the results.

Summary of Results

This worksheet gives an overall summary of your results. The results for all the surveys you have entered are grouped by the main stressors, allowing you to compare them with the results from previous years (if applicable).

The graph displays changes in the average for a period of up to three years and includes error bars which show the range of results for each average. This indicates the highest and lowest average scores for each stressor. The user can then refer to the Question by Question sheet for a more detailed breakdown.

<u>Question by Question</u>

This worksheet presents your results broken down by each question and will display the average for the current year. The two lowest average scores in each stressor will have a black box around them.

If you have entered data into 'Last Years Data' for comparison then **i)** the average of the previous year, and **ii)** the difference between the two year's averages (as a percentage figure) will be displayed.

If the average figure for this year is higher (improved) the result will be displayed in green, if lower it will appear in red (worse).

The overall average for each stressor is displayed, as well as the highest and lowest average response to the individual questions within each stressor. These are displayed underneath the questions as Overall, Max and Min respectively.

Note: If any individuals respond with a 1, 2 or 3 to either **question 5** (I am subject to harassment at work in the form of unkind words and behaviour) or **question 21** (I am subject to bullying at work), a message will be displayed indicating how many members of staff provided such a response.

In the Indicator Tool **'Demand'** and **'Relationships'** questions are negatively phrased which means their response scoring scale is reversed. A message will be displayed if a question that is reversed gives a result that is substantially different to the rest of the questions in that stressor. If this message appears, you should check that the data has been entered correctly. **5 is always the best possible response to every question, including questions that are reversed**.

6. Analysing Your Results

The Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey Collation Tool can be used to interpret the data generated from the Stress Risk Assessment survey based on the scores provided.

In the form of bar charts, **scores range from 1 (poor) to 5 (desirable)** and provides performance summary information against each of the six Management Standards of workplace stress:

- **Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – how organisational change (large or small / local or national) is managed and communicated.

The tool is designed to accept data from up to three surveys, the current one and two previous sets of data. This allows you to assess how its performance has changed over the period, identifying where improvement has occurred, which measures have provided the best results or satisfy yourself that the organisation does not have a problem.

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 their Trade Union Area Health and Safety/other Representatives, and explore any issues raised in more detail. The intention is that all the data you collect can be used to promote a system of continuous improvement.

Also, you should consider the states-to-be-achieved for each of the six HSE Management Standards; these provide aspirational targets for what should be happening to effectively manage work related stress:

Management Standard	HSE Definition of what should be happening:
Demands	• The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work. • People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands. • Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees. • Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.
Control	• Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work. • Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work. • Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work. • The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills. • Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken. • Employees are consulted over their work patterns.
Support	• The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees. • Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff and employees to support their colleagues. • Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it. • Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job. • Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.
Relationships	• Positive behaviours at work are promoted to avoid conflict and ensure fairness. • Employees share information relevant to their work. • There are agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour. • Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour. • Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.
Role	• The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible. • The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities. • The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear. • Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.
Change	• The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes. • The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals. • Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs. • Employees are aware of timetables for changes. • Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

More information on the HSE Management Standards for Workplace Stress can be found here as well as familiarising yourself with the RMG Managing and Preventing Workplace Stress guidance available via the Stress Toolkit.

Appendix A:

Example of a covering message which you can provide along with the survey.

Dear [Colleague or employee's name],

Royal Mail Group is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and we have been working with union/your representatives to try to identify where there may be risks to you. We recognise that work-related stress is a health and safety matter and acknowledge the importance of tackling the causes of stress in the workplace.

The attached survey consists of 35 simple one-line questions, and some basic items about your work. 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 to be sure that we are doing all we can to make this a good place to work. The questions asked do not allow for any individual to be identified.

Please take the time to complete the survey. It will provide an indication of how well we are performing and it will give an indication of where any problem areas might be. Don't rely on others to raise issues, stress is a subjective problem and can affect people in different ways.

The survey takes about 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.

Once returned surveys have been analysed, the results will be shared with you. The next stage will be to organise discussions to confirm the results, decide what the key issues are, and reach agreement on appropriate action.

When you have completed the survey, please return it to [enter name of person]. This should be by [enter return date if not completing during an existing meeting such as a WTLL]. If you have any questions concerning completion of the survey please speak to [enter contact name].

Thank you for participating.

Yours sincerely,

[This could be signed by the local or area manager and jointly signed with union representatives]

Appendix B:

Group Stress Risk Assessment Tool – Activity Plan.

Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey – Activity Plan

			Week Commencing:												
ID	Activity	Example Owner/s	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13
1	A need is identified, or a request is received to complete a Group Stress Risk Assessment Survey.	DOM/PIC													
2	Inform all relevant stakeholders (e.g. Management Team, Trade Union Area Health and Safety and other Representatives, Field HR.	DOM/PIC													
3	Agree and plan activity and owners.	Local Stakeholder Group													
4	Agree survey co-ordinator.	Local Stakeholder Group													
5	Engage with employees.	Local Stakeholder Group													
6	Distribution of surveys.	Survey Coordinator													
7	Survey responses received.	Survey Coordinator													
8	Responses submitted into survey collation tool.	Survey Coordinator													
9	Analysis of results.	Local Stakeholder Group													
10	Share survey results with Trade Union Area Health and Safety/Other Representatives and Employees and discuss improvement activity plan.	Local Stakeholder Group with Employees													
11	Agree action plan (activity, owners and timelines).	Local Stakeholder Group with Employees													
12	Review progress against plan (Involving Trade Union Area Health and Safety/Other Representatives).	Local Stakeholder Group with Employees													
13	Agree and plan repeat survey activity to review improvements.	Local Stakeholder Group with Employees													