

This Bulletin provides a summary of the revisions to Policy EN-18 Mental Stress approved by the Board of Directors on March 8, 2018.

Entitlement Policy

Policy EN-18

This policy was introduced in June 1999, following amendments to the legislation, which limited coverage under the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act (*the Act*) to mental stress that develops as an acute reaction to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event occurring in the course of employment.

The policy has recently been reviewed and revised by WorkplaceNL to ensure that workers, who experience traumatic mental stress arising out of and in the course of employment, are provided with the benefits and services afforded under *the Act*, and to ensure the policy is consistent with medical knowledge and awareness of work-related mental health issues.

The revised policy now broadens the definition of “sudden and unexpected traumatic event” by specifically including coverage for stress which results from more than one traumatic event, and eliminates the inherent risk exclusion. The policy revisions also include a less restrictive definition of “traumatic event,” and include adjudication criteria for decision-makers.

Effective March 8, 2018, the policy was revised as follows:

- added the consideration for the cumulative impact of exposure to traumatic events in the workplace in the adjudication of mental stress claims;
- revised the definition of traumatic event to remove the requirement for the event to be horrific, and replaced the example of being subjected to death threats with the example of being subjected to threats of physical violence, where there is reason to believe the threat is serious;
- eliminated the requirement for a traumatic event to be uncommon with respect to the inherent risks of the occupation;
- removed the requirement that an acute reaction manifest within days or weeks of the exposure to be consistent with the addition of adjudication for the cumulative effect; and
- replaced the section on “Medical Evidence” with a section on “Diagnostic Requirements” to provide clear direction on the medical evidence required.

Other revisions include material being re-ordered, definitions clarified and headings added to improve the clarity and consistency of the policy.