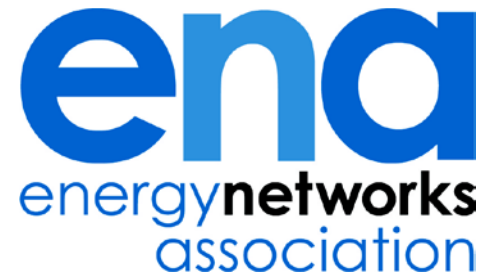


# ENA Occupational Health Committee



## **Stress - Initiatives**

*These case studies are designed to outline the overall management of stress programmes within ENA member companies, and so identify different approaches to the management of this issue and examples of good practice.*

### **Company Name: Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN)**

SPEN is the transmission and distribution business of Scottish Power. Its role is to improve and maintain the network of 65,000 km of overhead lines, 47,000 km of underground cables and 35,000 substations, and ensure continuity of a safe energy supply to over 5.1 million customers in North West England, North Wales and Central and Southern Scotland.

### **What did the Company do:**

Analysis of sickness absence data for the period 01 April 2006 – 31 March 2007 clearly shows a significant number of days lost due to stress and it is likely that a major portion of this may be work-related or work aggravated.

SPEN recognises its responsibility to prevent and reduce days lost due to stress, whether this be work-related or personal and have prepared a corporate policy on the Management of Stress supported by advice and guidance from Occupational Health, together with a robust health promotion programme to promote employee interest to take ownership of their own general health and wellbeing; for example by contacting either Occupational Health to talk to a Nursing Adviser or the Employee Helpline to talk to a qualified counsellor; learning relaxation techniques; exercising regularly and having a healthy diet.

### **Strategy:**

A key part of the strategy to reduce stress related sickness absence has been our participation in the Scotland Health at Work (SHAW) programme, now Healthy Working Lives (HWL), via HealthWise. This programme demonstrates the commitment by SPEN to setting a workplace standard of good practice in promoting healthier lifestyles to support a 'healthy body: healthy mind' framework. Themed health promotion campaigns and promotions are communicated to employees at all of our locations in Scotland, England and Wales. In December last year, a HealthWise 2007 Diary was sent to all employees, outlining the 12 months' health promotions together with staff challenges, to encourage staff to use the diary to record and monitor results. In recognition of a sustained programme, SPEN achieved the Bronze Award in August 2005 and the Silver Award in January 2007.

This strategy represents a joint commitment by SPEN Management and Occupational Health to work together to reach the following common goals:

- Reduction in incidence of work-related ill-health; *and*
- Reduction in number of work days lost due to work-related ill-health; *leading to* Healthier and more energetic staff; *delivering*
- Increased productivity and employee wellbeing.

The following data has informed and shaped our approach to managing workplace stress.

### **Age Distribution**

The prediction is that there is no age barrier to stress sickness absence but this data has yet to be analysed to determine if this prediction is correct or if there is an age link.

### **Field – Office Distribution**

The office to field staff split is 47% - 53%. The office staff includes clerical, control room engineers, planners, co-ordinators and schedulers; and field staff are comprised of industrial, field team leaders and site engineers. The prediction is that the main stress absence workgroups are within the 47% office staff split and that the 53% field split are the main orthopaedic absence workgroups but this data has yet to be analysed.

### **Sickness Absence**

The majority of absences are gastric and infections and are short-term due to the short-lived nature of these conditions. Orthopaedic absence affects 21.6% of the workforce and is generally short and medium-term strains and sprains. Whilst only 7.4% of the workforce is affected with psychological ill-health issues, i.e. stress, anxiety or depression, absences can feature significantly higher numbers of days lost per instance.

### **Health and Wellbeing benefits:**

Improving the health and wellbeing of our workforce is critical to achieving a successful business, and central to this has been in the promotion of physical exercise and healthy eating. To assist with physical exercise, there is subsidised/discounted gym membership on offer at local leisure centres and on-site gyms.

Over the past 18 months, SPEN have delivered a number of initiatives to promote a balanced lifestyle for its employees:-

- Stress management workshops aimed at raising awareness to identify areas of stress in people's lives and to explore strategies to help them manage stressful situations. Pocket booklets of information and ideas were handed out.
- Physical activity training programmes produced by our qualified training instructors, organised fun runs, cycle races, and a long distance walk to help workers 'let off steam'.
- Alternative therapy and relaxation sessions in the workplace, offering on-site massage, reflexology, Indian head massage and aromatherapy.
- Men and women's health checks, offering blood pressure and cholesterol tests, together with general health advice.
- Delivery of fresh fruit to encourage healthy eating.
- Supporting charities and making staff aware of advice and services available e.g. Macmillan Nurses.

To be quick and effective, early detection and assistance are essential and the Occupational Health Service supports our business by offering Management and Self Referral appointments; a confidential Employee Helpline, operated 24 hours per day; proactive health and lifestyle checks; physiotherapy; counselling; and rehabilitation services.

Good management and attention to the health and wellbeing of employees, with access to specialist services, such as counselling, and where necessary making reasonable adjustable by providing flexible hours, temporary changes in duties and mentoring, must be given priority to help staff do their job and avoid the high costs of sickness absence.

For some, the knowledge and awareness they attain as part of a good structured work programme can have a profound effect on their attitude to their health and wellbeing. This would feedback into the workplace and reinforce SPEN's ethos of 'happy, healthy & here'.

### **Business / Cost Benefits:**

In the UK, more than half a million people are currently affected by work-related stress, depression or anxiety, accounting for 13 million lost working days each year, each case resulting in an average of 29 working days lost.<sup>1</sup>

In 2005-06, SPEN had 186 absences affected by work-related stress, depression or anxiety, accounting for 5,216 lost working days, each case resulting in an average of 28 working days lost, highlighting the high cost of this long-term sickness absence when compared to orthopaedic factors where each case has an average of 14 days lost.

These statistics clearly show that SPEN stands to make significant improvements in the health and wellbeing of its employees by continuing to tackle the root causes of stress. These improvements will translate into more efficient services and cost reductions. With more people at work the pressure on colleagues is reduced and this may well return a reduction in ill-health and fewer psycho-social incidences.

### **Worker involvement:**

#### *SP Group Wellbeing Forum*

Senior Management-led forum develops consistent health promotion framework initiatives and shares best practice across the SP Group.

#### *HealthWise*

With guidance from the above forum, this steering group; comprised of staff from across our operating regions communicate the health promotion campaigns and themes, and provide health information, support and advice to improve the overall health and wellbeing of staff.

#### *SPEN Health & Safety Advisory Committee*

Consultation forum between SPEN management and trade union appointed representatives to advise upon and promote health, safety and welfare issues.

#### *Health & Safety Representatives Forum*

Consultation forum between H&S Reps to discuss and review health, safety and welfare issues. Management may attend by invitation.

## Management View:

Effective management of workplace stress has the potential to produce clear business benefits such as reduced sickness absence, reduced staff turnover and improved morale.

To augment the healthy lifestyle approach, SPEN have investigated the HSE's Management Standards<sup>2</sup> approach to workplace stress and have discussed this and alternative approaches with the HSE's Health & Safety Laboratory in Buxton.

## References

1. Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, March 2005
2. [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards)

## Picture/Graphics:

Examples of health and wellbeing promotions and campaigns.



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# healthise news

ScottishPower Energy Networks

## PROMOTING HEALTH AT WORK

Energy Networks is fully committed to the health, safety and welfare of all its employees. We have a Health and Safety Policy that displays a strong commitment to work-related health and safety performance and a goal of zero harm due to incidents or ill health.

In August 2005, the Business achieved the nationally recognised Gold Standard Health at Work (2005) Award. This was a recognition of the work undertaken by the Health and Safety Committee to improve health and safety performance and associated health services. The HSE is reviewing the award 2006 awards for Gold Standard (2006) to provide and reward best practice in occupational health and safety and also to encourage and recognise community activity.

Our aim is to continue to improve our health performance providing health services across our business. Although not our primary aim, we may also achieve the Health at Work (2006) Silver Award along the way. To help keep us focused in the right direction, we currently produce a group of 100 Health at Work Assessment (HWA) questionnaires to monitor what the key health issues are in our workplace. The results are used to develop a Health at Work Programme for 2007/07. The 100 focus, via the Health at Work Survey and the Occupational Health Department. The following are the four main health issues that were highlighted and will be prioritised over the respective quarters of this year:

- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Stress Management
- Health Checks

Our aim has different levels to the priorities of the above, however, it was necessary to establish a series of Health at Work Objectives at each level to help disseminate information and work closely with members of the Health at Work Steering Group. Their support and interest in providing Health at Work is much appreciated.

Through the provision of each of the four health issues, our objectives are to have:

- Healthier and more energetic staff
- Reduction in stress and long-term health problems linked to bad lifestyle habits
- Improved staff relations
- Increased productivity

66 Our aim is to continue to improve our health performance promoting health matters across our business 99

# events

## MAY – JULY

- LAUNCH OF HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE

## JULY – SEPTEMBER

- LAUNCH OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE

## OCTOBER – DECEMBER

- LAUNCH OF STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE

## JANUARY – MARCH

- LAUNCH OF HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE
- HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME – A CONFERENCE

66 Helping you control your weight, make you feel and look better, give you more energy and help you relax 99

DEVELOPING IMPROVEMENTS IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING