*CHAPTER 11*

*Reducing Stress and Improving Workplace Health and Safety*

# Chapter Objectives (C.O.)

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

**C.O. 1:** **Identify factors defining organizational stress and their impact on individuals.**

**C.O.2:** **Understand the relevance of return-to work practices to respond to absenteeism and disability issues.**

**C.O.3:** **Preventing accidents and developing a culture emphasizing safety.**

# Before applying, let’s review

**C.O. 1:** **Identify factors defining organizational stress and their impact on individuals.** In an organization, the key sources of stress: interface between job and family/social life, lack of career and achievement, safety problems, the problems of managing others and relationships with others, the physical environment at the workplace, living environment, managerial role, ergonomics, and shift work and organizational structure. However, much of stress depends on how a person reacts to a stressful incident. That is, people with certain personality characteristics affect a person’s reaction to stressors and increases the chances of succumbing to heart disease and other ill health effects. We are seeing the emergence of many health related injuries (such as depression) which are harder to diagnose and deal with. While responding to the mental health problems people are increasingly experiencing in work, we are also seeing a linkage between workplace stress and mental health problems. Stress can hinder a person’s ability to cope and perform, and depression is one of the more serious manifestations of this. Stress and depression have a variety of effects in the workplace and may result in damaged relationships, substance and alcohol abuse, and general ill health.

**C.O.2:** **Understand the relevance of return-to work practices to respond to absenteeism and disability issues.**  The costs of workplace absenteeism have led to a number of recommendations for improving absence management such as: (i) health promotion, (ii) assisting employees through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and (iii) return to work (RTW) programs. The research demonstrates that programs that provide supportive conditions at work are effective in reducing absenteeism costs.

**C.O.3:** **Preventing accidents and developing a culture emphasizing safety.** Preventing accidents from happening, encouraging due diligence, setting up a joint committee, communication, training and education, and enforcement, and developing a safety culture are key components to a safer workplace. The safety culture underlying prevention encourages workers to pay more attention to safety issues. In some cases, group members don’t effectively communicate about safety issues or the group culture might encourage people to take risks rather than act safely. These broader contextual influences assist in thinking of ways to redesign jobs and improve team performance by developing better communication processes and a culture of people who are safety minded.