

# Loss Control



FARMERS®

## Information Bulletin

### Reducing Stress

#### Cost and Effect

Job stress in the U.S. costs over \$200 billion annually. It is the number one problem for working people, many of whom are juggling work, home, and the care of children and aging parents.

Stress creates the “fight or flight” response in the brain that causes the stress hormone to speed up the heart, narrow the arteries, and raise blood sugar.

Chronic stress signals the body to store more fat. It impairs the immune system and increases our susceptibility to colds and infections. Increased accumulations of fat can damage the brain and other organs. The result is heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, kidney disease and high blood pressure prior to the age of 50.

The results of chronic stress show up in our behaviors at work and at home. Stress makes us irritable and jittery, causes us to lose focus, which can be dangerous to our safety on the road and in the work place.

Stress causes physical problems and illness creating headaches, stomach pains, neck and shoulder pains, weight gain, fatigue and depression. Any on of these problems may result in an increase in injuries on the job and results in verbal and possible physical violence at work.

#### Managing Stress

Since stress impacts people in different ways, it is important that we identify those situations that cause stress for us personally. Once we identify our personal stressors, we need to recheck to see which of those stressors we really have any control over.

If we are being honest with ourselves, it is apparent that we only have control over our own attitudes and behaviors. We then become responsible for our own choices, and the need to change our outlook and attitudes.

Here are some hints that will help to reduce stress:

- *Clear communications can reduce misunderstanding and potentially hazardous behavior.*
- *Time management skills can help work proceed in a smooth manner and reduce stress by prioritizing our workload and creating a manageable schedule.*
- *Keeping humorous calendars, or funny sayings, or cartoons available can assist by providing a “funny- bone” break.*
- *Using assertiveness skills and practicing relaxation and stress reduction exercises can also reduce stress.*

Practicing stress reduction techniques should improve health and safety.