

# Safety Column: Mental Health for Weights and Measures



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## **Mental Health for Weights and Measures**

The work of Weights and Measures inspectors can be very demanding. The job of inspections involves high-stakes decision-making, time constraints, liability, responsibility, emotional labor, and exposure to unpleasant conditions, can take a toll on mental health. However, combining proactive strategies and encouraging a supportive work environment can effectively mitigate these stressors and promote overall wellbeing.

Inspectors encounter a variety of challenges while in the field and it's important to understand how each can influence an individual. Accuracy and compliance are crucial, and inspectors must ensure the accuracy of measuring devices and adherence to regulations, a task that can be mentally taxing given the potential consequences of errors for both businesses and consumers. Inspectors also need to balance speed and thoroughness. Inspections often require rapid, yet precise assessments with a tight timeframe. This can create the challenge of managing cognitive load since it is important to regulators and the business that it is done quickly and effectively. One issue discussed often is navigating difficult interactions or de-escalation. Dealing with uncooperative or angry clients and communicating potentially negative findings demands tact, empathy, and emotional regulation, further adding to the inspector's emotional stress. There are also the potential legal or financial repercussions. The pressure of potential legal or financial liability from errors or missed issues can be a significant source of stress.

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So, what are some of the strategies for fostering mental well-being? Promote open communication and encourage open dialogue about workplace stress and mental health challenges among employees and supervisors. Providing mental health support is crucial and often available through most human resource offices. These resources include access to counseling services or referrals through employee assistance programs. We also need to facilitate stress management training by providing workshops or resources on coping mechanisms and relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Encouraging peer support can help create opportunities for inspectors to share experiences, ask questions, and gain insights from colleagues, fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation. Supervisors can perform regular “check-ins” and listen or respond when issues with staff arise. It is also important to emphasize the importance of regular mental health and self-care activities, such as practicing hobbies, exercising, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Other times it’s important to evaluate current processes and documentation requirements to identify opportunities to streamline workloads and minimize unnecessary anxieties. Some organizations offer flexible work schedules such as working four 10-hour days versus five 8-hour days. Depending on the employee, incorporating flexible work options help balance personal and professional demands. Something else we need is to encourage is physical activity and healthy eating since it can contribute to mental resilience and the ability to handle job demands safely and effectively.

By proactively addressing mental well-being in the Weights and Measures profession, organizations can support inspectors in fulfilling their critical role while prioritizing their health and fostering a positive, sustainable work environment.

