

Violence at Work

Violence in the workplace is often thought to be limited to a physical assault. In fact, it is any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted during her or his employment.

What is workplace violence?

- ▲ **threatening behavior** - such as shaking fists, throwing objects or destroying property
- ▲ **verbal or written threats** – any expression of an intent to inflict harm
- ▲ **harassment** – any behavior that demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, annoys, alarms or verbally abuses a person and that is known or would be expected to be unwelcome. This includes words, gestures, intimidation, bullying, or other inappropriate activities.
- ▲ **verbal abuse** – swearing, insults or condescending language
- ▲ **physical attacks** – hitting, shoving, pushing or kicking

What workplace factors increase the risk of violence?

- ▲ working with the public
- ▲ handling money, valuables or prescription drugs
- ▲ providing health care, advise or education
- ▲ working with unstable or volatile persons
- ▲ working in small numbers or working alone
- ▲ working in community-based settings
- ▲ working during periods of intense organizational change
- ▲ working in uncontrolled environments (home care, mental health outreach)
- ▲ working in Emergency or walk-in clinics
- ▲ working night shift or during stat holidays

What are your rights?

For the purposes of the OHS Code, violence is defined as the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury.

Employer must ensure that workplace violence is considered a hazard. They are obligated to perform hazard assessment – prevention is preferable to intervention

The assessment is to identify:

- aspects of the workplace that may enhance opportunities for violence
- individuals at high risk

- the need for controls Employees must receive training in: how to recognize workplace violence, policy & procedures to minimize or eliminate violence, appropriate response to violence, procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents

What about harassment?

The Code does not include harassment. However, most of UNA collective agreements include a provision that the employer have a harassment policy in place and that it be reviewed annually (revised if deemed appropriate) by the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

Policy should inform workers about:

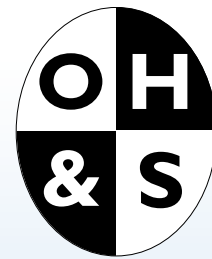
- what behavior management considers inappropriate and unacceptable in the workplace
- what to do when incidents covered by the policy occur
- contacts for reporting any incidents
- management commitment to deal with incidents of harassment in the workplace

What works?

- assigning at least two workers to high risk areas
- increasing lighting to eliminate hidden corners
- install protective barriers
- ensure that effective communication and security devices are in place
- providing workplace violence training
- providing support for victims of violence
- controlling access

What can you do?

- ▲ report incidents of workplace violence to your supervisor and your local OH&S representative – fill out a UNA OH&S form.
- ▲ contact your UNA local representative to assist you if you have been harassed – they can assist you to file a harassment complaint.
- ▲ request that your employer carry out a workplace assessment to identify risk factors for violence before you or a colleague become a victim of violence



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