Factors influencing workplace violence and harassment

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board

Workplace violence and harassment incidents severely impact workers and workplaces in industries across Canada. Workplace violence and harassment includes any act in which a person is threatened, intimidated or assaulted during their employment. Many factors can influence the risk of workplace violence and harassment.

What factors increase the risk of workplace violence and harassment?

Some factors are more obvious than others. Below are examples of factors that could increase the risk of workplace violence or harassment. Which could occur in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Factors that increase the risk include:

- working with the public
- handling exchange of money
- having a mobile workplace
- working with people known to be or likely to be unstable or volatile
- working alone
- working in isolated areas
- working late at night
- working without emergency communication
- transporting or moving patients or clients
- working where firearms are present
- working with people under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- working with inadequate safety policies or training on violence prevention skills
- working where poor environmental design may block vision or escape routes

What can be done to mitigate the hazards?

Below are several examples of mitigations that could help prevent workplace violence or harassment. Which could improve your workplace? Are there any others that may be useful in your workplace?

Mitigations include:

- engineering controls
  - physical barriers
    - deep counters
    - Plexiglas barriers
  - location of work space
    - desks are visible
    - employees have easy access to an exit and cannot be cornered
    - furniture is arranged to prevent entrapment
  - alarm systems
  - panic buttons

Talk leader instructions:

- **This is background information ONLY.**
- Be sure to customize to your organization.
- Consider printing copies of this sheet for yourself and each participant.
- Lead a discussion with your workers about the materials on this sheet.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible. Be open to questions.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Fill in the name of your organization, location and the date on your sheet. Have each worker sign your sheet to confirm their attendance.
- File your sheet in your worker records to document the Safety Talk.

- o radios
- o bright lighting
- o convex mirrors
- o cash-handling controls
- administrative controls
  - o safe work practices
  - o de-escalation training, for example:
    - speaking in a friendly manner
    - greeting the person in a friendly manner
    - showing interest and concern
    - never being judgemental
    - not being defensive
    - lowering your voice, tone and tempo
  - o limited cash on hand
  - o access to a phone for employees working alone
  - o check-in system for employees working alone

If you are exposed to workplace violence or harassment:

- follow your organization's emergency plan if immediate assistance is required
- follow the organization's incident reporting procedures
- report and record all incidents
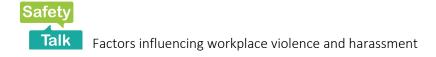- report to your supervisor

Discussion questions:

1. Which risk factors are you exposed to in your workplace?
2. Is violence or harassment considered in your workplace hazard assessment?
3. What could be done in your workplace to reduce the likelihood of violence and harassment?

More information:

If you have more questions or concerns about factors influencing workplace violence or harassment, please contact:

- Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, 667-5450 or 1-800- 661-0443 or work.safe@gov.yk.ca
- Yukon Human Rights Commission, 867-667-6226

Safety Talk record:

Print and complete this page or fill in electronically, then save as a record of your Safety Talk.

Comments/suggestions

Organization name

Safety Talk leader

Date

Safety Talk participants   print name   signature