

Domestic violence includes a range of behaviours or actions taken by a person to control and dominate another person. It is characterized by abusive, coercive, forceful, or threatening acts or words used by one member of a family, household or intimate relationship against another. It may also take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial or spiritual abuse. Domestic violence becomes a workplace concern when it affects or is likely to affect anyone in a workplace.

What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury, this includes domestic violence. Employers may not see domestic violence as a workplace hazard, but it is a hazard when it negatively affects a victim, co-workers or an organization. Employers and supervisors do not have control over workers' relationships, but they do have responsibility to protect everyone in the workplace. Below are examples of how domestic violence can impact people in the workplace. Which could occur in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Ways domestic violence can affect the workplace include:

- workers being put at risk by an abusive partner or family member who:
 - makes harassing phone calls
 - stalks a victim at work
 - makes threats against the victim or others in the workplace
- workers (other than the victim) being injured or killed while trying to intervene or while going about their everyday work, unaware of the threat

What can be done to prevent the hazard?

Required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments to identify what kinds of hazards, including domestic violence hazards, are present in their workplaces
- employers must develop a policy and procedures to prevent workplace violence and harassment which addresses the potential for domestic violence in the workplace
- employers must train workers on their violence and harassment prevention policy and procedures

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.

- if an employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that a worker is or is likely to be exposed to domestic violence in the workplace, the employer must take reasonable precautions to protect the worker and any other persons in the workplace who are likely to be affected (see *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*, Part 19 - Violence and Harassment Prevention, section 19.05)
 - these precautions may include:
 - informing staff of any risks of domestic violence in the workplace while balancing respect for worker privacy with worker safety
 - conducting ongoing risk assessments as situations change
 - responding as required to each individual when both work for the same organization
- employers must have procedures in place to let affected workers know what supports are available, for example employee assistance programs, peer support programs, or community resources like counselling or mental health services

Additional controls:

Employers and workers may believe that domestic violence is a personal issue and that workplace parties can do nothing about it. This belief would make it even harder for a victim to ask for help. Employers, supervisors and co-workers can support victims by:

- being non-judgemental
- asking questions, but being conscious of their comfort level
- avoiding telling an employee or co-worker what to do
- supporting a worker who is experiencing domestic violence by developing a personal safety plan for their time at work. It should be tailored to the employee's self-identified needs, keeping the overall safety of the workplace in mind
- knowing that a victim is at greatest risk when leaving an abusive relationship

Victims of domestic violence may want to:

- ask their employer to help them with a personal safety plan
- keep their employer informed of threats and provide a photo or description of the abuser
- ask to be relocated or change hours of work
- park near the building or get an escort to car, bus, etc.
- screen calls and emails or change phone number

If someone is exposed to domestic violence in the workplace:

- 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. As a worker, would you feel safe disclosing to your supervisor or others on your team that you are a victim of domestic violence?
2. What procedures could be put in place to make it easier for workers to inform supervisors about domestic violence in their lives?

More information:

If you have more questions or concerns about preventing domestic violence in the workplace, 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
