

Workplace violence is the threatened, attempted or actual exercise of physical force by a person that causes, or is likely to cause, an injury to a worker. It is also a threatening statement made or any conduct engaged in by a person that gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury. (See *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*, Part 1 - General, section 1.02.) Violence can cause physical and psychological injuries.

What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury, this includes violence. Some hazards are more obvious than others. Below are some examples of violence hazards that could lead to injury. Which could occur in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Forms of violence may include:

- threatening behaviour
- verbal or written threats
- verbal abuse
- harassment
- sexual abuse or statements
- poisoned work environment
- bullying behaviour
- cyberbullying
- domestic violence in the workplace
- physical attacks

What are some risk factors associated with violence in the workplace?

Risk is the likelihood that someone will be harmed if they are exposed to a hazard. Most instances of workplace violence are predictable and preventable if hazards are identified and steps are taken to mitigate the risks.

Below are some risk factors that could increase the likelihood of an injury from violence. Which of these risk factors is relevant to your workplace? Can you think of others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Risk factors include:

- working alone or in small groups
- working in isolated locations
- working with the public
- handling money or valuables, including drugs, liquor or tobacco
- working at night or early in the morning
- working in public buildings or areas
- having young or inexperienced staff
- working in areas with a history of violence or crime
- previous incidents of violence in the workplace

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.

What are the possible effects?

For individuals, the effects can include:

- minor or serious physical or psychological injuries
- temporary or permanent physical disability
- shock, anxiety and psychological trauma

For organizations, the effects can include:

- low morale
- increased job stress
- increased absenteeism and turnover
- reduced trust of management and co-workers
- a hostile working environment

What can be done to prevent violence in the workplace?

Required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments to identify what kinds of hazards, including violence hazards, are present in their workplaces
- workplaces must have a violence and harassment prevention policy and procedures in place
- employers must train workers on their violence and harassment prevention policy and procedures
- procedures must explain how to make a complaint, investigate a complaint and share investigation results
- reporting procedures must say how to make a complaint of violence to someone other than the employer, if a worker has a complaint against their employer
- workers must take all necessary precautions to ensure their own health and safety and that of everyone else in the workplace, including preventing workplace violence
- workers must report immediately to their supervisor any situation they have reason to believe would present a hazard, including violence hazards
- workers must report any accident or injury that results from their work
- employers must take measures to eliminate or control the risks of hazards, including violence hazards, identified in their workplace
- 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:

Specific actions may be considered based on the hazard assessment in your workplace. For example:

- scheduling to avoid leaving workers alone
- procedures to restrict access to money and higher-value objects
- check-in procedures
- monitored security systems
- training
- emergency response buttons
- guest sign-in procedures
- design elements like lighting, lines of sight or barriers
- de-escalation

If you are exposed to workplace violence:

- 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. What daily workplace activities do you do to prevent violent behaviour?
2. What is your workplace's emergency plan in case of a violent incident?
3. Where do you find resources to support you if you are exposed to violence?

More information:

If you have more questions or concerns about preventing workplace violence, please contact:

- Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, 867-667-5450 or 1-800-661-0443 or work.safe@wcb.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
