

# SURVIVAL

## RULES FOR A ROBBERY OR VIOLENT INCIDENT

- 1. Follow instructions:** Do exactly what the offender says
- 2. Stay calm and quiet**
- 3. Avoid eye contact**
- 4. Do not make a sudden movement**
- 5. Remain inside the workplace:** Do not chase the offender
- 6. Show your Hands:** If you have to move, keep your hands where the offender can see them and tell them what you are going to do
- 7. Do not attack the offender**
- 8. Mental notes:** Note as much information about the offender as possible, if it is safe to do so. Look at things like height, hair colour, eyes, physical condition and tattoos/special marks

## 6. What to do after a robbery or violent incident

After a robbery or a violent incident, employers and the person in charge at the time of the incident should follow a number of steps to help them deal with the situation.

After the robbery or violent incident:

### Person in charge at the time of the incident

- Make sure that victims receive **prompt medical attention** if injured
- Notify your employer – if they are not on site
- Prepare an incident report

### Employer

- Notify the **Police**
- Arrange **counselling** for the victim(s) because they may suffer from post 'traumatic stress'. The symptoms of post traumatic stress include increased heart rate, insomnia, muscle tension, hypersensitivity, fear of returning to work, depression, grief, guilt and anxiety
- Notify **WorkCover** within 7 days by filling out an Incident Notification form. All incidences must be reported whether a physical injury occurs or not

## Further information

If you require further information contact the WorkCover Assistance Service on 13 10 50.

Mail to:

Locked Bag 2906

Lisarow NSW 2252

Website: [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)

Email: [contact@workcover.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@workcover.nsw.gov.au)

# Work environment – violence in the workplace >

**Employers are under obligation to provide safe and healthy workplaces and employees are also obliged to take reasonable care at work. Violence in the workplace is not acceptable. This information bulletin provides practical steps for addressing violence in the workplace.**

## What is violence at work?

The expression of violence takes many forms, ranging from physical assault and verbal abuse to intimidation and low level threatening behaviour.

The term 'violence at work' applies to 'any incident in which employees and others are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of work undertaken. This also includes employers, self-employed people and any other person who may be affected by a violent incident in the workplace.

It is important to recognise that violence is a workplace hazard, and reasonably practicable steps should be taken to protect employees and others in the workplace from violent incidents.

Violence at work can happen in a variety of workplaces. It may cause mental and physical pain and suffering, and may result in permanent disability or even death.

Employees may be exposed to various forms of violence and threatening behaviour. The violence may come from members of the public, students, patients or clients, or from supervisors, managers or other workers.

## Working alone or at night may increase Risk

Recent workers' compensation figures indicate that 74% of workplace assaults in Western Australia occurred in the community services industry. More than half of the assaults were to nurses, social workers, guards, security officers and prison officers

Forms of violence such as verbal abuse, intimidation and threatening behaviour not resulting in physical injury are difficult to quantify, but may have significant effects upon the psychological well being of employees.

Employees who deal with members of the public in service industries and government agencies are likely to be exposed to these forms of violence.

The threat of robbery or attack is a significant factor for employees who handle such items as cash or drugs.

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## Why reduce the risk of violence and aggression at work?

There are costs associated with workplace violence. As well as the financial costs of absenteeism, lost productivity, higher workers' compensation insurance premiums and medical expenses, there is the personal cost of emotional trauma suffered by the victims and their families.

Even the potential risk of violence, threats or abuse in a workplace can cause stress and emotional suffering. Both employers and employees can benefit from reducing the risk of violence at work.

There are obligations under the *Work Health Act* requiring employers to provide safe and healthy workplaces. These laws mean that all practicable measures should be taken to reduce risks associated with violence at work, as for any other hazard.

Employees also have a duty under the *Act* to take reasonable care at work, and this includes reporting situations where there is potential for violence, so that action can be taken by the employer to ensure a safe system of work.

## What causes violence at work?

It is difficult to find a reason for every violent outburst, but there are some common factors that may apply to workplaces. There is often a combination of personal and environmental factors influencing the situation.

Violent, abusive or threatening behaviour at work may occur for different reasons, for example:

- random violence with no clear intent, such as from a disturbed person or patient, or from someone under the influence of alcohol or other drugs;
- intimidation, used to achieve a desired end, such as faster service;
- the expression of uncontrolled irritation, such as a dissatisfaction with poor service or prolonged discomfort;
- displaced anger from past or non-work-related situations, applied unreasonably to the issue at hand;
- related to criminal activity, thrill-seeking or revenge; and
- related to cultural or religious difference between subgroups in society.

## Management plans to reduce the risk of violence at work

Prepare a management plan that identifies the potential for threatening or violent incidents at work that may result in injury or harm to the health of employees and others at the workplace. A plan to manage violence at work should be prepared in consultation with employees and health and safety representatives, or a health and safety committee.

Then assess and control the risk of violence in your workplace. It may be appropriate to seek specialist assistance, eg security agents, police or support services.

The recommended approach to the management of violence at work is to eliminate the opportunity for violent or threatening behaviour to occur. Initiatives that provide additional personal protection, such as personal alarms or self-defence training, may assist in minimising the risk of injury or harm to health.

## Steps to developing a Management Plan to reduce violence at work

A management plan should include the following steps:

- 1) **Identify types and areas of work where employees are likely to be exposed to some form of violence.** This may include:

- reviewing accident report records;
- gathering information from people at the workplace on past incidents involving violent, threatening or abusive behaviour;
- providing information to staff to increase awareness of violence as a hazard, and to help them to recognise incidents that should be reported;
- assigning a particular person in the organisation to deal with inquiries and report of violent incidents; and
- providing a confidential means of reporting violent incidents for those employees who may require it.

2) **Assess the nature and the extent of the problem throughout the workplace.**

This applies to the obvious high-profile threats and risk of physical attack, as well as the low-level forms of threat and intimidation.

Assessing the problem should involve analysing information gathered on violent incidents to determine and understand reasons for:

- similarity between incidents, patterns of behaviour;
- underlying causes of violent behaviour;
- nature of the violence – whether physical assault, threatening behaviour, intimidation or verbal abuse;
- who is at risk of injury or harm – including clients, customers, patients or members of the public;
- frequency of the incidents; and
- staff perception of their safety or exposure to violence.

3) **Control the situation by finding ways of preventing the type of violent incidents that have been identified in each work area.**

Introducing new ways of managing violent and threatening behaviour will be easier and more effective if employees are actively involved in bringing about change that will affect their work.

Specific actions may include:

- changes to the work environment, eg redesigning waiting areas to provide welcoming, calming surroundings, installing security lighting and protective barriers, improving surveillance and visibility of offending behaviour, reducing irritating background noise.
- changes to the system of work to limit the opportunity for violent and threatening behaviour, eg improving cash handling procedures, rostering experienced staff, rostering more staff at peak periods to reduce stress, setting realistic deadlines; and
- providing information, training and supervision to improve each employee's ability to identify potentially violent situations and take appropriate action.

## Back-up

Where it is not practicable to completely eliminate all opportunities for violent and threatening behaviour, the management plan should include back-up procedures to be followed before and when violent or threatening situations occur.

These may involve:

- selecting appropriate staff, who have clear guidelines to follow;

- induction training for new employees in the work area where an incident may occur;
- training in interpersonal skills to improve each employee's ability to diffuse potential violence;
- a system for alerting co-workers or the police, that urgent help is required;
- additional personal protection, such as personal alarms and self-defence training;
- procedures for the victim and offers to follow if verbal or physical abuse occurs; and
- victim support services for employees involved in violent incidents at work to manage the impact of crisis situations and developing skills for handling violent incidents in the future.

## **Monitor**

Monitor the results of changes that have been introduced to reduce the risk of violence, using a system where employees can provide regular feedback, and make more modifications as necessary.

Careful monitoring of a potentially threatening or violent situation allows the effects of each change to be assessed. In addition, it ensures that any remaining problem or change in the nature of the problem can be identified.

## **Review**

Review the management plan on a regular basis as part of the safety management process, and after any specific incidents. Appropriate preventive measures will depend on the nature of each problem, but it is likely that a combination of measures will be needed to reduce the risk.

## **NT WorkSafe >**

**GPO Box 4821**

**Darwin NT 0801**

**Telephone:** 1800 019 115

**Facsimile:** (08) 8999 5141

**Email:** [ntworksafe.deet@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntworksafe.deet@nt.gov.au)

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# Work environment - violence management checklist >

**This information bulletin provides a checklist to test if potential causes of violence in the workplace are successfully identified, assessed and controlled. Few workplaces would score a possible 50.**

## The workplace

	Yes	No
Are money/valuables/drugs kept at the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are violent situations fairly frequent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are people affected by alcohol or other drugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are people or patients sick or disturbed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are customers likely to be angry, disgruntled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff relationships stressed or tense?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each NO answer)		

## Employees

	Yes	No
Are certain employees likely to become violent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff have to work alone or at night?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do inexperienced staff deal with customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employees bored, stressed, unhappy at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employer/employee relationships strained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each NO answer)		

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## Training

	Yes	No
Have staff been trained to diffuse violence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff have interpersonal skills training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there safe procedures for violent situations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff understand the violence management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff trained to report violent incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each NO answer)		

## Violence management plan

	Yes	No
Does your workplace have one?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was it drawn up in consultation with employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it cover identification, assessment, control?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it cover induction and training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it set safe procedures for hazardous tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an action plan for violent situations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it include first aid and medical support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it include back-up from police, emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff understand the violence management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it include de-briefing and victim support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the plan reviewed after each violent situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each YES answer)		

## Identify, assess and control

	Yes	No
Are all workplace violence reports analysed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employees asked about risk of violence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are potentially violent people identified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are causes of potential violence identified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have risks of injury or harm been assessed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there controls for averting violence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have they been used successfully?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employees happy with the controls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each YES answer)		

## Consultation and co-operation

	Yes	No
Is the health and safety committee involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a procedure for reporting incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all changes discussed with employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employees asked opinions on violence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are employees asked opinions on violence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is safety of public/customers/patients considered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each YES answer)		

## When violence occurred

	Yes	No
Did employees act according to management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did anyone get injured or harmed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were other employees quickly alerted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were police/emergency services promptly called?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was first aid immediately available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was there prompt medical and victim support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was rehabilitation service provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were employees asked what they thought?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was there a review to do it better next time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total points (One point for each YES answer)		
<b>Overall Total</b>		

The total possible score is 50/50. The higher your score, the lower your chances of experiencing violence at work and the better equipped your management program is to deal with the situation if violence should occur.

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