

# VIOLENCE AT WORK

(See also: [Accident Reporting \(RIDDOR\)](#)(4); [Risk Assessment](#)(68); [Stress](#)(82))

## VIOLENCE AT WORK

### INTRODUCTION

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of work-related violence is:

**'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.'**

Employees whose job requires contact with the public can be at risk from violence. Included in those at risk are people engaged in giving a service, caring, education, cash transactions, delivery/collection, controlling or representing authority. Working environments such as retail premises, financial institutions, licensed premises (hotels, clubs, pubs, etc) all provide the potential for violence towards employees.

Violence can lead to poor morale and a poor image for the organisation, together with extra costs arising from absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments. For employees, violence can cause pain, distress and even disability or death. Anxiety or stress can also damage employees' health.

### THE LAW

In addition to general duties under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the requirement for risk assessment under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, under RIDDOR 1995 there is a requirement to report any act of non-consensual physical violence done to an employee at work which results in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for three or more days.

### TAKING ACTION

There may be a need for the effective management of violence at work in certain businesses. This can be carried out in a straightforward four stage process - i.e.

- Stage 1 : Find out if you have a problem ) ie. risk
- Stage 2 : Decide what action to take ) assessment
- Stage 3 : Take action
- Stage 4 : Review/monitor what is done.

#### **Stage 1 : Find out if you have a problem**

- Ask your staff (e.g. verbally, short questionnaire).
- Keep detailed records of incidents (including verbal abuse and threats).
- Classify all incidents; this may help identify patterns or areas of greatest risks and hence help prioritise action.

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## **Stage 2 : Decide what action to take**

- Decide who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risk - factors may include the environment where incidents may take place, the design/nature of the job and the level of training and information provided or required.
- Record the findings.
- Review and revise the assessment as necessary.

## **Stage 3 : Take Action**

Any policy/procedures could be incorporated into your health and safety policy statement and/or any associated documentation. Action may include changes to the layout of the premises, safe systems for visiting (2 person; comprehensive diary details), good practice whilst on site (safe procedures, safety awareness etc.) and suitable training (e.g. inter personal skills; escape techniques/skills).

## **Stage 4 : Review/monitor what is done**

Checks should be carried out on a regular basis on how well the arrangements are working. Employees or their representatives should be involved in this consultation process.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE VICTIMS?**

Rapid and effective responses to violent incidents can help avoid long-term distress to employees. In planning for this, the following could be considered:-

- debriefing.
- time off work (may also need specialist counselling).
- legal help.
- other employees (may need guidance and/or training to help them react appropriately).

## **SOURCES OF ADVICE**

Two very useful books have been published by the Health and Safety Executive, as follows:-

- Preventing violence to retail staff - HS (G) 133**  
The contents include an overview of violence at work, developing a policy, preventative measures/training/networking, support and specific issues affecting small business and working alone. Appendices include a sample incident report form.

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ii) **Prevention of violence to staff in banks & building societies - HS(G)100**

This publication includes an executive summary, the need for an integrated policy, security policy and managing the risks, support for staff after a robbery, public relations and media policy, communication, education/training and monitoring/evaluation.

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## **CHECKLIST - VIOLENCE AT WORK**

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Do you know if your business or your type of business has a problem (including potential problem) of violence at work?   | YES | NO |
| 2. Do you keep records of violence at work incidents?   | YES | NO |
| 3. Have you carried out a risk assessment on those activities where there is a potential for violence at work?              | YES | NO |
| 4. Have you established a policy and procedures to deal with violence at work and are they reviewed/monitored as necessary? | YES | NO |
| 5. Do you have a system in place to deal with the victims of violence at work incidents?                                    | YES | NO |
| 6. Do you know where to go for further advice and information?  | YES | NO |

## **REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS**

- \*\*1. Leaflet IND (G) 69L (Rev) : Violence at work - a guide for employers (HSE) [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf)
- \*2. Booklet HS (G) 133 : Preventing violence to retail staff (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 0891 3
- \*3. Booklet HS (G) 100 : Prevention of violence to staff in banks and building societies ISBN 0 7176 0683 X (HSE)

### **Useful Addresses**

1. Victim Support, National Office, Cranmer House, 39 Brixton Road, London SW9 6DZ (0207-735-9166)  
[www.victimsupport.org/](http://www.victimsupport.org/)
2. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 14 East Sheen Avenue, London (0208-392-1839) [www.suzylamplugh.org/home/index.html](http://www.suzylamplugh.org/home/index.html)
3. Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Tay House, 300 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4LN (0141-331-2726)  
[www.cica.gov.uk/](http://www.cica.gov.uk/)

\* Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA

\*\* Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.

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