



VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

There are two main types of violence in the workplace:

- verbal or written abuse or threats
- physical attack on a person or property.

Behaviour that scares or implies immediate physical threat to you is violence, just as much as physical assault.

Workplace violence can be carried out by people outside your work, by your clients or customers, or by anyone within your organisation.

Examples of violence include:

- abuse over the telephone
- sexual assault
- malicious damage
- armed robbery
- written threats.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Different situations may call for different action, depending on how severe and immediate the threat of violence.

In general, if you feel under threat:

- stay calm
- do not provoke the aggressor
- withdraw yourself from the situation
- try not to get isolated
- do not confront or pursue the offender
- defend yourself only as a last resort
- report it to your manager or safety committee representative.

Often, workplace violence follows a pattern of increasing aggression, which may involve:

- annoyance
- raised voices
- verbal threats and physical gestures
- actual physical violence.

Be aware of these signs so that you can avoid the situation getting worse.

making a difference

WHAT SHOULD MY EMPLOYER DO ABOUT IT?

By law, your employer must take reasonable steps to ensure your safety at work.

If you work in a role that is particularly at risk of violence – such as in hospitality, welfare or transport – make sure that your employer has assessed the risks and taken appropriate steps to minimise them.

Ways to control the risks of workplace violence include:

- providing a secure work environment
- installing physical barriers and security systems
- removing any incentive for violence (eg not holding cash)
- training and supervising staff
- changing work processes.

If your employer doesn't have a written risk assessment, get them to contact WorkCover for advice.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For general guidance, read WorkCover's publication *Violence in the workplace* (Catalogue No. WC00070.1).

If your workplace has particular security systems or risks of violence – ask your employer for appropriate training and supervision.

If your employer does not help or you still feel at risk, contact WorkCover directly.

We can also give you or your employer specific advice on the risks in your workplace.

For more information, call **13 10 50** or visit our website www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Disclaimer

This publication may contain occupational health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au).

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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Catalogue No. **WC05894** WorkCover Publications Hotline **1300 799 003**



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