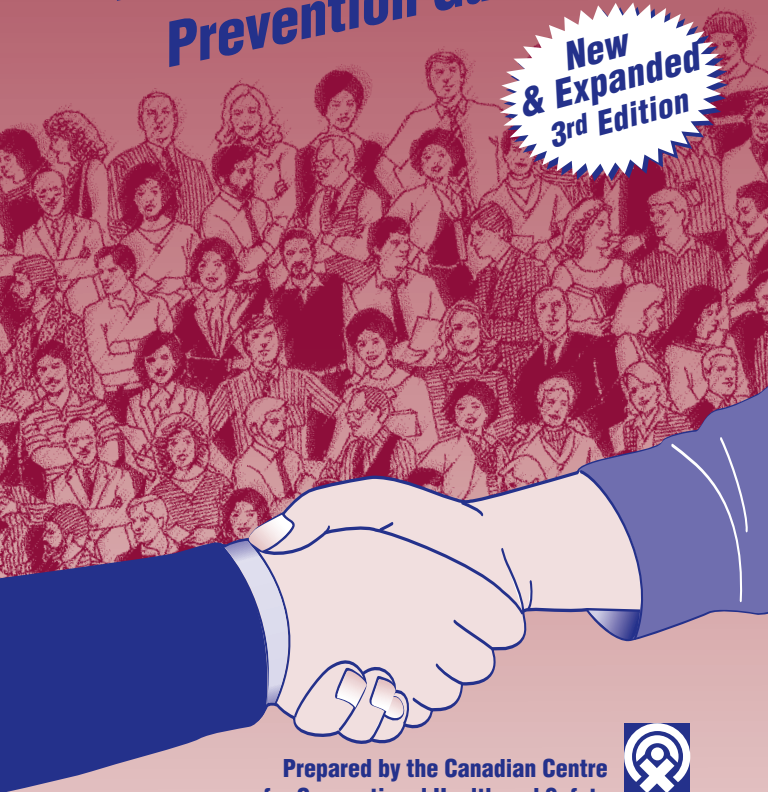


Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide

**New
& Expanded
3rd Edition**



Prepared by the Canadian Centre
for Occupational Health and Safety



Objectives

This is your guide to developing a workplace violence prevention program. Using the advice in this booklet, you will be able to:

- identify risk factors
- develop a prevention policy
- conduct a hazard assessment
- develop a comprehensive prevention program
- develop procedures for reporting and investigating incidents
- develop a critical incident management plan
- develop victim support services
- follow-up on and learn from incidents
- develop a training program
- identify relevant legislation

Scope

This guide will assist in the development and implementation of a workplace-specific violence prevention program. It is a practical hand-out for participants in employee training sessions.

The guide does not address the specific needs of police officers, security guards, prison guards or others whose job it is to manage potentially violent people and situations.

Target Audience

This guide is written for anyone who wants to learn about workplace violence and its prevention. It is especially useful to individuals involved in the development and implementation of workplace violence prevention programs.

How do I use this Guide?

The information in this guide has been organized to support the development of workplace-specific violence prevention programs across business sectors and occupational groupings. For this reason, the content is presented by workplace setting or situation (e.g. “working alone”), rather than by occupation (e.g. “service station attendant” or “taxi driver”) or business sector (e.g. “retail”).

Section II describes how to establish a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program. You may choose to apply some or all of the advice, depending on factors such as:

- the risk of violence at your organization
- the size of your organization
- the legal requirements in your jurisdiction

As a minimum, there are certain steps to workplace violence prevention which everyone should follow, including writing your own policy and conducting your own hazard assessment.

Once you have completed your workplace violence hazard assessment (as described in Section II.1), you will have developed a priority list of situations or circumstances which put you or your co-workers at particular risk. Using those factors or program components, consult the sections of this guide called “Preventing Workplace Violence” and “Responding to Workplace Violence”. Using the practical knowledge that you and your co-workers have of your workplace, you can develop the best preventive practices for your specific situation. The following chart indicates some of the risk factors more commonly associated with specific occupations.

Evaluate the history of violence in similar places of employment.

You may use one or more of the following approaches.

Obtain information and advice from:

- your insurer
- regional or national insurance associations
- your workers' compensation board
- your occupational health and safety enforcement agency
- your local police department
- your union

Seek advice from a local security expert.

Review relevant publications, including industry specific journals.

Contact your regional or national safety councils.

Contact your state, provincial or equivalent crime prevention associations.

Contact your professional association or industry organization.

Collect newspaper or magazine clippings relating to violence in your industry.

Contact legislative authorities to determine if specific legislation regarding workplace violence prevention applies to your workplace.

Refer to Section VI for general information on workplace violence prevention legislation in Canada and the United States.

Organize and review the information you have collected.

Look for trends. Identify occupations and locations which are most at risk.

7. Providing Workplace Violence Training and Education

Education and training are an indispensable part of any violence prevention program. The exact content and type of training necessary depend upon the results of your workplace hazard assessment and your workplace-specific prevention program.

All employees need to understand:

- their rights and responsibilities under any relevant legislation and company policy
- the scope of workplace violence and risk factors
- your organization's prevention policy



Know your rights and responsibilities.

2. Personal Safety

Emergency Preparedness

- Know your emergency exits and procedures, including safe places or rooms.
- Know where to access telephones, including local pay telephones.
- Imagine appropriate responses to various situations you may find yourself in.
- Decide ahead of time how you will respond to various situations.
- Compare procedures with your co-workers or people with similar occupations.
- _____
- _____



Know how you will respond to violent situations.

Working with Patients and their Families

- Approach patients and their family members in a non-threatening, respectful manner.
- Provide the right information at the right time. DO NOT overload patients or family members with too much medical or technical jargon.



Clearly and fully explain procedures.

- Review the patient's profile prior to meeting with the patient and/or family. Take note of any potential concerns and take appropriate precautionary measures, for example use the "buddy" system or increase natural surveillance.
- Clearly and fully explain to the patient and/or family, before and during procedures:
 - what is involved
 - how long it will take
 - whether it will hurt
- If you feel threatened, DO NOT conduct intimate examinations of patients alone. Arrange to have a colleague in the room or close by.

3. Responding to Harassment, Bullying or Mobbing

If you feel that you are being bullied, mobbed, discriminated against, victimized or subjected to any other form of harassment:

- Talk to someone you trust about your observations and experiences. This might include a trusted co-worker, occupational health professional or an Employee Assistance Counsellor.
- Firmly tell the harasser or bully that his or her behaviour is unacceptable and unwelcome. Ask him or her to stop.
- Keep a factual journal or diary of daily events. Record:
 - The date, time and what happened in as much detail as possible
 - The names of witnesses
 - The outcome of the event

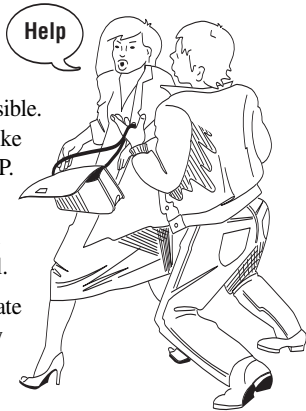
Remember, it is not just the character of the incidents, but the number, regularity and especially the pattern that reveal harassment.

- Keep copies of all letters, memos, e-mails, faxes, etc. received from the harasser or bully.
- When criticism or allegations are made, write to the harasser or bully and ask him or her to substantiate their claims in writing.
- Keep all memos and correspondence related to your work if the quality of your work is being challenged.
- Report the harassment, bullying or mobbing behaviour to the person identified in your Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, your manager or your human resources department. If your concerns are minimized, proceed to the next level of management.

7. Responding to a Physical Attack

If you are attacked

- Make a scene, yell or scream as loud as possible. Try shouting words like STOP, FIRE, or HELP.
- If you are being pulled along or dragged, fall to the ground and roll.
- Blow a whistle, activate your personal security alarm or push the security alarm.



Shout for help.

- Give bystanders specific instructions to help you. Single someone out and send them for help, for example “You in the yellow shirt, call the police.”
- If someone grabs your purse, briefcase, deposit bag or other belongings, DO NOT resist. Throw the item to the ground several feet away from the thief and run in the opposite direction, yelling “help” or “fire.”
- DO NOT chase a thief.
- Run to the nearest safe place, a safe office, or an open store.
- Call security or the police immediately after the incident.
- If the attack does not warrant calling the police, inform your supervisor or the authorities at your workplace.
- File an incident report.

Be prepared

- Take a self defence course.
- Try to imagine yourself responding successfully to different types of attacks. Practice your responses.

-
- to immediately report all critical injuries to the government department responsible for OH&S
 - to train all employees on how to safely use, handle, store and dispose of hazardous substances and handle emergencies

5. Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC)

- must be composed of management and employee representatives
- at least half the members of the committee must be employee representatives
- must meet at least once every 3 months; 1 month in some jurisdictions
- must be co-chaired by one management chairperson and one employee chairperson
- employee representatives are elected or selected by the employees or their union

6. Role of the Joint Health and Safety Committee

- to act as an advisory body
- to identify hazards and obtain information
- to recommend corrective actions
- to assist in resolving work refusal cases
- to participate in accident investigations and workplace inspections

7. Work Refusals

You can refuse work if you have reason to believe that the situation is unsafe to either yourself or your co-workers.

- You must report to your supervisor that you are refusing to work and state why you believe the situation is unsafe.
- You, your supervisor, and a JHSC member or employee representative will investigate.