

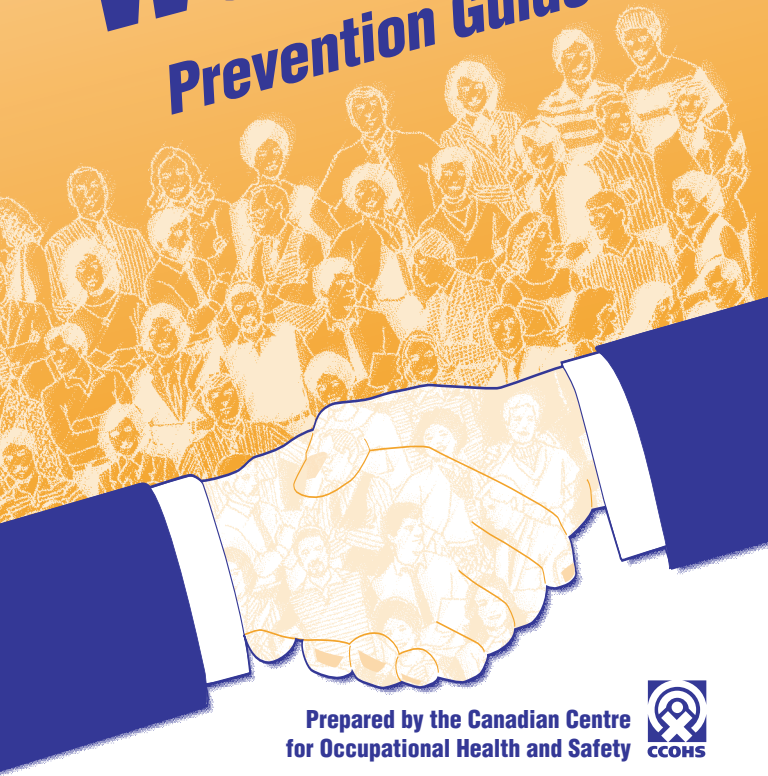
2nd Edition

Violence

in the

Workplace

Prevention Guide



Prepared by the Canadian Centre
for Occupational Health and Safety



CCOHS

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 risk assessment.

Once you have completed your workplace violence risk 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.

Table of Contents

Section I	Introduction	
	1. What is Workplace Violence?	2
	2. Why is Workplace Violence an Important Issue?	4
	3. What Factors Increase the Risk of Workplace Violence?	5
	4. What should a Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Say?	7
Section II	Developing a Workplace Violence Prevention Program	
	1. Conducting a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment	12
	2. Developing Preventive Measures	17
	3. Reporting and Investigating Workplace Violence	18
	4. Establishing an Emergency Response Plan	21
	5. Providing Victim Support	23
	6. Conducting Incident Follow-up	26
	7. Providing Workplace Violence Training and Education	28
	8. Conducting Program Review	30
	9. Using Community Resources	31
Section III	Preventing Workplace Violence	
	1. Warning Signs	35
	<i>Physical Signs of a Potentially Violent Person</i>	35
	<i>Warning Signs of a Troubled Employee</i>	36
	<i>Warning Signs of a Potentially Violent Person</i>	38
	<i>Common Characteristics of Violent Incidents. Between Employees</i>	40
	2. Personal Safety	41
	<i>Emergency Preparedness</i>	41
	<i>Trusting your Instincts</i>	42
	<i>Dealing with Strangers</i>	43
	<i>Elevator Safety</i>	44
	3. Workplace Design	45
	<i>Building Security</i>	45

<i>Visitors</i>	47
<i>Waiting Areas</i>	48
<i>Natural Surveillance</i>	50
<i>Electronic Devices and Surveillance</i>	51
<i>Workplace Layout</i>	53
<i>Parking Lot Design</i>	55
4. Work Situations and Interactions	57
<i>Robbery Prevention</i>	57
<i>Handling Cash</i>	59
<i>Banking Money</i>	60
<i>Working Alone</i>	61
<i>Working Off-Site</i>	63
<i>Working Late</i>	68
<i>Working with Young People</i>	70
<i>Working with Patients</i>	73
<i>Managing Workplace Change</i>	76
<i>Resolving Problem Behaviour</i>	78
<i>Preparing for a Potentially Violent Meeting</i>	80
<i>Managing Workplace Terminations</i>	82
<i>Threats Against Employees</i>	84
<i>Internet Harassment</i>	85
<i>Stalking Situations</i>	88
5. Work-Related Travel	89
<i>Walking Safety</i>	89
<i>Driving Safety</i>	91
<i>Parking Lot Safety</i>	93
<i>Public Transit Safety</i>	95
<i>Travel Safety</i>	97
<i>Hotel Safety</i>	99

Section IV Responding to Workplace Violence

1. Dealing with a Potentially Violent Person	102
<i>Tips for Verbal Communication</i>	102
<i>Tips for Non-verbal Communication and Behaviour</i>	104
<i>Tips for Problem Solving</i>	105
2. Terminating a Negative Interaction	107
3. Responding to Harassment	108

4. Responding to an Abusive Telephone Call.....	110
5. Responding to Internet Harassment	112
6. Making an Emergency Services Call	114
7. Responding to a Physical Attack	115
8. Responding to a Hostage Situation.....	116
9. Responding to a Robbery	118
10. Responding to a Bomb Threat	120
11. Lock-Down Procedures	122
12. Emergency Evacuation Procedures.....	123

Section V Conclusions

Is your Organization Prepared?	126
Common Mistakes Made in Dealing with Violence Issues.....	126

Section VI Occupational Health and Safety Legislation

1. Canada	128
2. United States.....	133
3. Where to Go for Regulatory Advice and Information ..	136

Section VII Key Sources used to Prepare this Publication

.....	154
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Section VIII Appendices

1. Sample Risk Assessment Questionnaire	158
2. Sample Inspection Form	160
3. Sample Reporting Form.....	170

6. Conducting Incident Follow-up

Incident follow-up occurs some time after the incident has been investigated and recommendations made. It involves taking a second look at the situation.

All incidents of violence should be classified according to key characteristics, such as:

- location
- time
- working activity or interaction (e.g. working alone and/or working off-site)
- type of incident
- outcome
- who was involved (e.g. co-worker, client, stranger)
- possible causes

Once the incident has been classified, you should look for similarities or common patterns. For example, do the majority of incidents occur:

- at a particular time of day (e.g. 1 to 4 a.m.)?
- during a particular time of year (e.g. report card time, Christmas)?
- inside or outside the workplace?

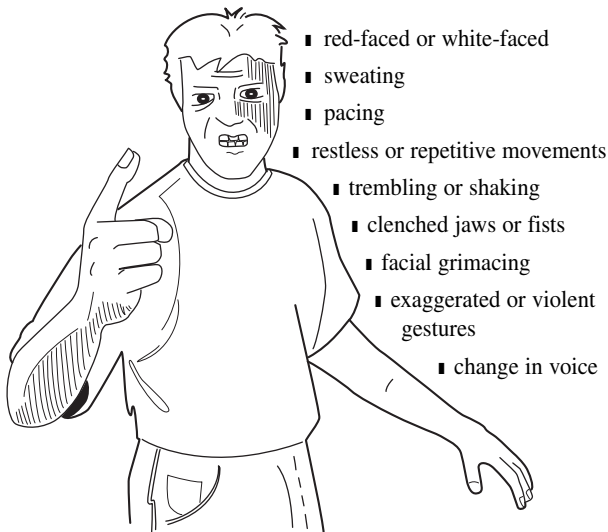
These observations will help you identify new or previously undefined risks and will give you opportunities to strengthen your prevention program. Follow-up should involve establishing steps to prevent or minimize repeat occurrences.

Revisit your training and education programs and determine if they should be re-designed or if refresher training should be provided. Outline what corrective actions are necessary and how you will achieve them.

1. Warning Signs

Physical Signs of a Potentially Violent Person

Use caution if someone exhibits one or more of the following non-verbal signs or body language:



- red-faced or white-faced
- sweating
- pacing
- restless or repetitive movements
- trembling or shaking
- clenched jaws or fists
- facial grimacing
- exaggerated or violent gestures
- change in voice

Exercise caution if you notice these signs.

- loud talking or chanting
- shallow, rapid breathing
- scowling, sneering or use of abusive language
- glaring or avoiding eye contact
- violating your personal space (they get too close)

Elevator Safety

- DO NOT get on an elevator with anyone who makes you feel uneasy. Wait for the next elevator.
- Get off the elevator if a suspicious looking person gets on with you.
- Stand near the control panel when entering an elevator.
- If someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable, push the button for the next floor or push the alarm.
- _____



**DO NOT GET ON
the elevator if you
perceive danger.**

Parking Lot Design

- Make sure entrances and exits are well marked.
- Use signs to remind users to “lock your car,” or “remember your level and aisle number.”
- Put up “no trespassing” or “security patrolled” signs if it is true. **DO NOT** give your clients a false sense of security.
- Use sufficient lighting.
- Replace burnt out light bulbs promptly.
- Paint underground walls white to:
 - increase the light levels
 - minimize hiding places
 - maximize visibility for patrols
- Keep exterior walls and plants under 3 feet high.
- Trim tree branches below six foot height.
- Use speed bumps in traffic lanes near exits or drive-up windows.
- Use security patrols wherever possible.
 - Patrol regularly.
 - Vary patrol times.
 - Vary patrol routes.
- Provide parking lot escort services after hours or after dark.
- Clearly mark alarms.
- Zone alarms for response so that security personnel can respond quickly.
- Use cameras for electronic surveillance wherever possible.

Working Alone

“Working alone” includes employees who work by themselves without close or direct contact with co-workers. For example, the receptionist in a large office building may be considered a “lone” worker.

Administrative Tips

Every effort should be made to avoid having employees work alone in areas of recognized risk. If using a second employee is not feasible,

- Put more experienced employees on higher risk shifts or in higher risk areas.
- Provide the employee with a means of emergency communication (e.g. a cellular phone). Check its proper operation at the beginning of the shift and at least once during the shift.
- Post emergency numbers.
- Periodically check the well-being of the employee. Use the check-in procedures described in “Working Off-Site” on page 63.
- Arrange agreements with other company locations, adjacent merchants or security firms to monitor your employee.
- Provide a protective enclosure.
- Ensure that a qualified person will respond immediately to signs of distress.
- Post signs indicating employees are not working alone, e.g. real estate open house signs should list the names of two real estate agents.
- Prominently display signs indicating that the premises are monitored.

Internet Harassment

Internet harassment is the use of the Internet (the World Wide Web or e-mail) to repeatedly harass or threaten someone. It can involve behaviours such as:

- Sending unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail.
- Encouraging others to send the victim unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail or to overwhelm the victim with e-mail messages.
- Sending viruses by e-mail (electronic sabotage).
- Spreading rumours.
- Making defamatory comments about the victim in public discussion areas.
- Sending negative messages directly to the victim.
- Impersonating the victim online by sending an inflammatory, controversial or enticing message which causes others to respond negatively to the victim.
- Harassing the victim during a live chat.
- Leaving abusive messages on Web site guest books.
- Sending the victim pornography or other graphic material that is knowingly offensive.
- Creating a Web page that depicts the victim in negative ways.

Prevention Tips:

- Use a gender neutral e-mail address if you have a choice.
- Make your e-mail password at least seven (7) characters long and ensure that it is a combination of letters and numbers. The best passwords don't spell anything and don't follow a logical pattern.
- Change your password regularly.