



Workplace Violence

Everyone has the right to feel and be safe at work.

Violent incidents in workplaces are becoming all too common and it is essential that employees and employers work together to stop this becoming a normal occurrence. All too often, **workplaces normalise aggression and violence in the workplace and it is assumed that this behaviour is 'part of the job'.**

Aggression may come from outside or inside the workplace. It may be from members of the public, customers, clients, patients, students, supervisors, managers or other employees. Whatever the circumstances, violence or aggression are unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

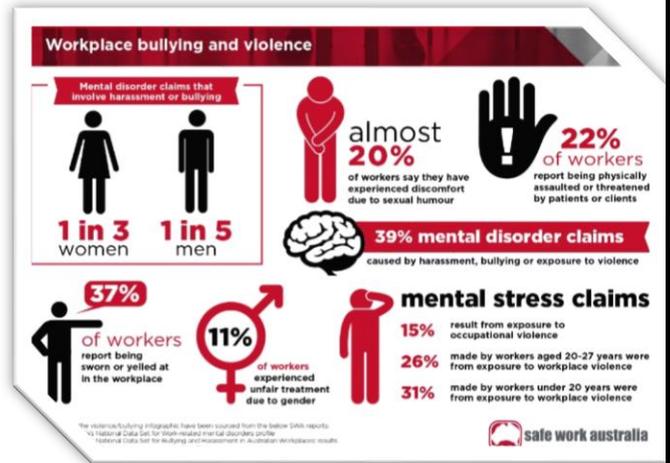
Violence and aggression is a serious issue and can cause emotional, psychological and physical distress to individuals as well as interfere with productivity.

What Action should be taken?

Employers must take appropriate steps to prevent and manage the risk of aggression and violence in the workplace at work. This can be achieved by developing and implementing a Prevention Management Plan, developed by employers in consultation with relevant employees and safety and health representatives. The Prevention Management Plan should include procedures for identifying hazards, reporting, assessing risks and applying control measures appropriate for the workplace.

When developing a Prevention Management Plan thought must be given to the type of work that is performed and the layout and design of the workplace. In addition, it is vital that staff are made aware of the Prevention Management Plan provided with adequate training and information about in how to apply the steps in the plan. Most importantly employees need to feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and action will be taken.

Aggression and violence must not be tolerated and employees need to be reported immediately.



What is the law?

Physical assault or the threat of physical harm of any form is a criminal act. Under these circumstances, the appropriate response is a direct complaint to the police. If a crime is happening or someone is in immediate danger, contact emergency services by telephoning 000.

'General duty of care' and 'general duties' are terms used to refer to the duties outlined in the WA OSH Act. Employers, whether directly employing staff or under contract, labour hire arrangements must, to their best ability ensure that they provide and maintain a

safe workplace. Workers' must, to their best ability ensure their own safety and that their actions do not adversely impact on others safety of others at the workplace.

The WA OSH Act (1984) outlines a range of duties that must be undertaken by a wide range of parties within a workplace. Whereas the WA OSH Regulations (1996) provide details on how to manage or deal with more specific health and safety topics that may arise in your workplace.

These duties include:

- Not exposing workers to hazards.
- Providing information, instruction and training.
- Conducting risk assessments.
- Investigating hazards or injuries that have been reported to employers by employees.
- Notifying WorkSafe of reportable injuries.
- Providing and maintaining safe workplaces.

What can workers do?

Join your Union! The more members from your workplace the more power you have to make changes to workplace conditions as a group, with the support of your Union.

The best place to start is **report all hazards – even the psychosocial ones** to your employer. Under section 23K of the WA OSH Act the employer must get back to the employee that reports a hazard and tell them how they fixed the hazard or what they intend to do to reduce the level of risk associated with that hazard.

Request the Election of OSH Representatives. OSH Reps should be nominated and elected by workers to represent their interests in regards to health and safety. There is no requirement regarding the number of Reps that are elected, so determine how many you should have based on the size of your workplace, the type of work performed, where and when that work is performed. For example if you work in a small office of 20 employees you might only have 1-2 Reps however if you work in a school you might have 4-5 depending on the type of work performed. At the end of the day this should be decided in consultation with workers.

Request the establishment of a workplace OSH Committee. The committee should have at least half of its members directly nominated and elected by staff. The Committee should assist the employer to manage and review any health and safety issues at the workplace. The Committee should consult with workers to identify and resolve health and safety issues.

Get your Reps trained at Unity Training Services. We have been training OSH Reps for 30 years and are professional, passionate and highly qualified Health and Safety Trainers. Visit www.unitytraining.com.au or call 9227 7809.

Contact WorkSafe WA for advice and support **1300 307 877.**

Contact your Union to assist with the resolution of health and safety issues, to assist with elections of Reps and to provide advice and support on safety issues.

We all want safe workplaces! We want to return from work in the same condition we arrived and enjoy the things that matter most.