



Psychosocial Hazard Quick Guide

WORK-RELATED VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

Violence and aggression occurs when individuals are **abused, threatened or assaulted while at work**. Work-related violence and aggression can arise from acts or threats of harm, and can be physical, verbal or non-verbal in nature. This can be perpetrated from individuals external to the workplace, from clients and internally between team members. Violence and aggression pose a risk of harm to those directly and indirectly exposed to them and can increase the risk of psychological or physical injury whether it is a **one-off incident or repeated and continuous**.

A quick guide to managing the risk of violence and aggression is summarised below, to help you understand how to spot and address this in your teams.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Look out for these warning signs or behaviours that may indicate issues with, or risk of, violence and aggression:

WORKPLACE RISKS

- Team members handle cash or valuables
- Team members work with distressed members of the community or must provide enforcement as part of their role
- The workplace environment creates stress or frustration (e.g. *frequent delays or queues*)
- Work is done alone, at night or in isolation
- Other psychosocial hazards are present (e.g. *high job demands*)

ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

- Yelling, threats or intimidation
- Pushing, shoving or tripping others
- Physical assault (e.g. *hitting or kicking*)
- Armed robbery or threats
- Sexual assault
- Physical intimidation



POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

If instances of violence and aggression occur as either a one-off incident or repeated incidents, they can increase the risk of:



Physical harm and injury



Emotional and/or psychological harm (e.g. *Post-traumatic stress disorder*)

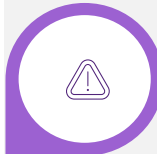


Fear of attending the workplace leading to decreased job satisfaction or engagement



Absenteeism and turnover if team members do not feel safe at work

When considering the level of risk for this hazard in your team or workplace, remember to ask yourself:



1. How **LONG** have issues been occurring?
2. How **OFTEN** are they occurring?
3. How much do these issues **IMPACT** your team members?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Some actions you could take as a leader to address the risk of violence and aggression:

- ▶ **Communicate a clear 'zero tolerance' policy** toward violence and aggression from and/or towards your team
- ▶ **Promote regular review** of established workplace incident and emergency response procedures with your team
- ▶ **Look for ways to minimise opportunities** for violence and aggression in the workplace through safe systems of work (e.g. *barriers, electronic payments, working in pairs*)
- ▶ **Make sure your team members have the resources** to respond to emergencies (e.g. *protective PPE, unobstructed exit points*)
- ▶ **Empower team members to put their safety first** by restricting or suspending interactions if they feel threatened
- ▶ **Provide prompt support** for team members directly or indirectly exposed to aggression or violence (e.g. *referral to psychological services, debriefing*)



GOOD PRACTICE

Managing this risk effectively is a continuous process and you should review your knowledge and the effectiveness of your actions regularly.

Keep these tips in mind:



Learn from the past. Review data from any previous incidents to identify what measures may prevent them from re-occurring



Consult team members when establishing safety measures, to understand what would make them feel safe



Put safety first. Getting yourself and your team to safety is always your first priority when incidents or risks arise



Be specific when assigning responsibilities for high-risk situations (e.g. *who will call the police, who will assist the affected team members*)