

## Safety Tips for Specific Risks Factors of Workplace Violence

These safety tips include examples of control measures that protect workers from the potential hazard of violence. These tips can be used as resource or training materials by posting or distributing and reviewing with workers at staff meetings.

### Dealing with Irate Persons

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Be familiar with warning signs of potentially violent behavior
- If you feel you are being harassed, threatened or intimidated:
  - tell the person to stop
  - document the incident (e.g. the nature of the incident, time, place, witnesses)
  - inform the co-op

### Verbal Communication

- Focus your attention on the person; let them know you're interested in what they have to say
- Remain calm
- Speak slowly, quietly and confidently
- Speak simply – do not rely on official language or complex terminology
- Listen carefully – do not interrupt or offer unsolicited advice or criticism
- Encourage the person to talk – do not tell the person to relax or calm down
- Try to understand – ask questions like *“Help me understand why you're upset.”*
- Once you think you understand, repeat it back to the person so they know you understand
- Remain open-minded and objective
- Use delaying tactics to give the person time to calm down (e.g. offer a drink of water)
- Acknowledge the person's feelings – indicate that you can see he or she is upset

### Non-Verbal Behaviour and Communication

- Use calm body language – relaxed posture with hands unclenched, attentive expression
- Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked
- Position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person
- Give the person enough physical space; this varies by culture, but normally 2-4 feet is considered an adequate distance
- Get on the other person's physical level; if they are seated, try kneeling or bending over, rather than standing over them
- Do not pose a challenging stance, such as standing directly opposite, putting your hands on your hips, pointing your finger, crossing your arms

### Problem-Solving

- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes, so you can better understand how to solve the problem
- Ask for his or her recommendations
- Accept criticism in a positive way, when a complaint might be true, use statements like "*You are probably right*" or "*It was my fault.*" If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions
- Be honest – do not make false statements or promises you cannot keep
- Remain professional and take the person seriously
- Be respectful
- Break the issue down into smaller units and offer step-by-step solutions so that the person is not overwhelmed by the situation, issue or solution
- Be reassuring and point out choices
- Try to keep the person's attention on the issue at hand
- Do not take sides or agree with distortions
- Do not reject the person's demands or position from the start
- Find ways to help the person save face
- Establish ground rules if unreasonable behaviour persists
- In a calm and non-threatening manner, clearly state that violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- Avoid issuing commands and making conditional statements
- If the nature of the situation involves punishment or sanctions: delay the punitive action until you have backup or the situation is safe
- If you feel threatened, try to politely and calmly terminate the interaction in a non-threatening manner

### **Handling Money and/or Valuables**

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Keep cash funds to a minimum
- Use electronic payment systems if possible – for example: automatic ticket dispensers or collectors, debit cards, credit cards, cheques
- Install and use a locked safe
- Change the combination of the safe at frequent intervals
- Post visible signs which indicate that minimum cash (state amount, e.g. less than \$50) is kept on the premises
- Do not handle large amounts of cash or count money in public view
- Install security screens in high-risk areas

### Banking Money

- Deposit money to bank on a frequent basis
- Use an unmarked bag or container to carry cash and/or securities
- Vary the route taken to the bank or financial institution
- Vary times of deposit
- Avoid making night deposits
- Observe your surroundings before making your transaction
- If possible, rotate the task so that it isn't always the same person making the deposit
- Avoid making deposits alone especially if employees work in remote and isolated areas; one person should face the other way to act as a lookout while the other makes the deposit.

### **Working with Unstable or Volatile Persons who may be Potentially Violent**

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Store away objects or equipment (e.g., sharp objects) that could be used to hurt people
- Use special rooms for meeting (e.g., rooms with windows in the door, rooms close to other employees, rooms with easy exit in case of emergency)

### **Working Alone**

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Carry a communication device (cell phone, radio etc.)
- Know your environment (location of exits, neighbours etc.)
- Make sure someone knows where you are and your plans (when you plan to leave etc.)

### Site work

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Carry a communication device (cell phone, radio etc.)
- Make sure someone knows your work plans and schedule