

Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Tool



A risk assessment tool for addressing violence at your workplace, including domestic violence

As stated in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, a risk assessment must be performed in any workplace in which a risk of injury to workers from violence arising out of their employment may be present (*s4.28*). This may include threats or violence affecting the workplace through an employee's domestic situation. If you become aware of a threat to the workplace arising from a domestic violence situation, you must conduct a risk assessment.

The risk assessment should take into consideration the location and environment of your workplace as well as any previous violent incidents at the workplace. The considerations and examples outlined in this document are examples only and can be used to help you start to think about how you would conduct a risk assessment for violence, including domestic violence, in your workplace. Each workplace is different and the suggestions here will not necessarily be appropriate for all work sites.

Using the results of the risk assessment, you should develop or update your workplace violence prevention program to include domestic violence and to address the specific needs of your organization and workers.

Considerations

Risk assessments should take into consideration:

- The nature of work activities
- The working conditions (e.g., location, isolation, contact with non-employees)
- The design of the surrounding environment (e.g., noise, accessibility)
- The frequency of situations that present a risk of workplace violence
- The severity of adverse consequences to employees exposed to a risk of workplace violence
- The observations and recommendations of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or health and safety representative (HSR), and of employees
- The measures that are in place to prevent and protect against workplace violence
- Legal responsibilities (e.g., privacy issues, addressing risks of violence in the workplace)



Example risk assessment strategy and questions

Below is a sample strategy for conducting a risk assessment for violence, including domestic violence, in organizations of all sizes. Not all the suggestions may be appropriate for your workplace, so it is important to think about what else should be included in your risk assessment.

- It is important to involve the JHSC or HSR in the assessment whenever possible.
- Speak with as many employees as possible from every site, section, and shift. When discussing ways to prevent domestic violence from entering the workplace, you may want to speak with employees confidentially to avoid having personal information disclosed. When discussing ways to prevent violence in general, it may be appropriate to speak with groups of people.
- Review records and reports (e.g., employee incident reports, investigation reports).
- Many workplaces find it advantageous to include staff in establishing procedures for eliminating or minimizing risks.
- General questions regarding risks of violence could include:
 - What violence have you been exposed to on this job?
 - Do you know of any violence that has happened to others in similar jobs?
 - What violence-related concerns do you have on this job?
- In a very large organization, you may want to supplement this process by sending all employees a form that covers relevant questions about their experiences of violence on the job. The forms can be anonymous; however, employees should ensure they list their job types, shifts, and locations (e.g., “file clerk, afternoon shift, downtown office”).

If your risk assessment identifies a risk of injury to workers from domestic violence, you need a workplace policy that addresses domestic violence in the workplace. Even if you are unaware of a risk, it is a good idea to have a workplace policy that addresses domestic violence. Tools to help you create a workplace domestic violence policy can be found at www.worksafefbc.com/domesticviolence. That policy, combined with your leadership, should help to create a supportive workplace culture that encourages staff to come forward if they have concerns about domestic violence. You should also talk about domestic violence and available workplace resources at staff and safety meetings so employees are aware they will be supported if they disclose information.

If an employee discloses that she/he is suffering from domestic violence, talk to that employee confidentially. Tips on how to talk to employees about domestic violence can be found in *Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers* at www.worksafefbc.com/domesticviolence. Make it clear that there will be no adverse job-related consequences for disclosing workplace risks related to a domestic violence situation. Respect your employee’s privacy as much as possible by only asking about concerns that might affect the workplace. As an employer, you are responsible for workplace safety only. For example, you might ask the victim:

- Has your partner ever made threats to harm you while at work, or have you been stalked, experienced physical violence, or received offensive or unsolicited communication during working hours (e.g., phone calls, emails, visits)?
 - If yes, what was the nature of the incident (e.g., verbal threat)?
 - Who was the offender?
- Do you feel safe from domestic violence at work? Why or why not?



- Do you think violence is more likely on certain days or times of the day (e.g., if the perpetrator works the same shift as the victim on certain days; or increased risk on weekend shifts when the victim's partner is not at work and is able to come to your workplace)?
 - If yes, when and why?
- Do you think violence is more likely to occur in certain places (e.g., the parking lot)?
 - If yes, where and why?
- What do you think could be done to minimize the risk of violence?
- Are there any situations on the job when you feel particularly vulnerable?
 - If yes, what are they?
- Have you ever created a personal safety plan for your time at work?
 - If yes, what did it include?

Determine whether the details you have gathered in the risk assessment lead you to believe there is a risk of injury to workers from violence in your workplace. If there is, consult the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation ([s4.24–4.31](#)) and take appropriate action to address the risk. If you believe there is an immediate risk to your workplace, contact the police.

Next steps

If you do not already have a workplace safety plan for threats of violence, make one based on the results of your risk assessment. If you already have a plan in place, review and update it to ensure it addresses any issues identified. You could also sit down with the employee who is experiencing abuse to create a personal safety plan for her/his time at work. Information about workplace and personal safety plans can be found in *Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers* at www.worksafebc.com/domesticviolence.

For further assistance

For assistance in preparing a risk assessment and addressing identified safety concerns, contact your local police, a WorkSafeBC Prevention Officer, or another threat assessment professional. WorkSafeBC Prevention Services can be reached at 604 276-3100 or toll-free at 1 888 621-SAFE (7233). Use the non-emergency police number unless you are concerned about an immediate threat. A list of resources is available at www.worksafebc.com/domesticviolence.