

Office of Industrial Relations

Work-related Violence and Aggression

Prevention and Management Guideline

Purpose

To provide guidance for the prevention, early identification, and post incident management of work-related violence and aggressive behaviour affecting the Office of Industrial Relations (OIR).

Scope

This guideline applies to all OIR employees (permanent, temporary and casual), visitors and contractors. The guideline does not directly apply to administrative processes involving employee bullying and harassment.

Legislative or other authority

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Qld)

Key Principles

The guiding principles adopted by the OIR for controlling work-related violence and aggressive behaviour include:

- violence and aggression against OIR employees is not acceptable and shall not be tolerated;
- whether it is intended or not, work-related violence and aggressive behaviour is a workplace hazard;
- a risk management approach will be adopted in the management of work-related violence and aggressive behaviour;
- incidents resulting from work-related violence and aggression will be investigated and appropriate control strategies implemented as required;
- OIR employees will take practical and reasonable steps to prevent work-related violence or threatening behaviour towards employees by imposing access restrictions for visitors;
- should an employee believe their personal safety is at imminent risk, they have the right to withdraw from the area;
- appropriate information, training and supervision will be made available to all persons working on the behalf of OIR to prevent and manage work-related violence risks; and
- Managers must ensure staff training is up-to-date and a record of all training including the date, training details, provider, employee attendance and recommended refresher date must be kept.

Roles and Responsibilities

OIR Health and Wellbeing team will ensure the monitoring, reporting and responding to incidents of work-related violence by:

- managing the incident reporting, investigations and recommended actions on the work-related violence register as outlined on the reporting flow chart;
- providing de-identified reports including actions taken and trend analysis to the Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Committee and the Board of Management (BOM);
- actively implementing and monitoring for the effectiveness of workplace policies, guidelines and procedures regarding work-related violence; and
- developing strategies for the prevention and management of work-related violence and aggression.

Managerial commitment at all levels is essential to the success of work-related violence prevention and management strategies. OIR management will ensure:

- all incidents will be taken seriously and will be reported and investigated to eliminate or minimise risks of work-related violence;
- confidentiality is maintained among all parties involved in investigating and responding to work-related violence incidents;
- employees involved in incidents of work-related violence are protected from media intrusion;
- identified employees will be appropriately trained to follow workplace procedures and emergency responses to work-related violence through an approved OIR training program;
- employees are empowered and supported in the use of workplace procedures in the prevention and response to incidents of work-related violence;
- lessons learnt are shared appropriately.

Employees will take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others. This includes:

- discussing concerns with their manager about situations that may involve/give risk to violent or aggressive behaviour;
- employees have a responsibility under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to report workplace health and safety incidents and near misses, including acts of aggression and work-related violence via OIR's [Work Health and Safety Incident Report Form](#);
- reporting incidents of work-related violence to a manager or supervisor;

The Health and Wellbeing team in Organisational Culture will support and provide assistance and information and will escalate matters to the HSW Committee when appropriate.

CONSULTATION

Consulting with OIR workers at all levels about work-related violence and aggressive behaviour should occur when:

- identifying and assessing work-related violence and aggression risks in the workplace;
- making decisions about ways to prevent and manage work-related violence and aggression risks;
- making decisions about information and training on work-related violence and aggression;
- witnessing signs that work-related violence and aggression may be affecting the health and safety of workers;
- proposing changes that may affect the health and safety of workers;
- a workplace incident that involves work-related violence or aggression has occurred.

Detailed information about consultation is available in the [Work health and safety consultation, co-operation and co-ordination Code of Practice 2011](#).

RISK MANAGEMENT

Managing the risks of work-related violence and aggression is a planned, systematic process. It involves:

- identifying, assessing and analysing work-related violence and aggressive behaviour risks to determine:
 - what could harm workers;
 - how likely it is that harm could occur, for example 'not very likely', 'very likely';
 - how serious the harm could be, for example minor, serious or fatal.
- controlling work-related violence and aggressive behaviour risks, which focuses on determining the most effective risk control measures for any given circumstance;
- reviewing and improving the effectiveness of control measures, to ensure prevention measures are working as planned and, when necessary, improved.

Consulting with workers, health and safety representatives (HSRs) and health and safety committees (HSCs) may be required at each step of the risk management process. Drawing on the experience, knowledge and ideas of workers is more likely to result in the identification of all hazards and the selection of effective control measures.

Detailed information on the risk management process is available in the [How to manage work health and safety risks Code of Practice 2011](#).

ACTIONS

Step 1: Identification of Work-related Violence and Aggressive Behaviour Risk Factors

The Manager, in consultation with key stakeholders, shall assess all work-related violence hazards to determine contributing risk factors (source of hazards) and to identify and prioritise risk management strategies.

The following are the recognised OIR work-related violence and aggressive behaviour direct risk factors among clients, visitors and members of the public:

- frustration and/or dissatisfaction with service delivery or service policies (e.g. issuing prohibition notice, review decisions, tribunal assessments);
- known history of violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour;
- working alone (in isolation);
- working offsite or in the community;
- working in unpredictable environments;
- communicating face to face with customers;
- enforcement activities;
- driving related abuse and aggression (road rage);
- working at night or outside business hours.

Potential work-related violence hazards shall be identified at the work unit level to identify work areas, work-related groups, services and tasks at risk of work-related violence; and reviewed annually or in light of a serious incident. Work unit risk analysis may be conducted in consultation with the Organisational Culture Unit and may include a review of work-related violence incident data including:

- incident reporting systems;
- workers compensation claims or other reporting such as EAP;
- security activity and reports;
- workplace hazard inspection;
- employee consultation.

Step 2: Assessment and Analysis of Work-related Violence and Aggressive Behaviour

The contributory risk factors include the following:

- work environment and area design (e.g. poor design or layout of a work area, including furniture and fittings, inadequate or unsuitable equipment, poor lighting)
- work organisation, systems of work, policies and procedures (e.g. staffing shortages and high workloads; working in isolation; skill mix; workload control)
- interagency relationships, (e.g. Queensland Police Service)
- repeated behaviour that has not been addressed
- lack of understanding of the role of OIR employees.

Step 3: Controlling Work-related Violence and Aggressive Behaviour Risks

Exposure to identified contributing risk factors (i.e. the source of the risk) shall be managed by the workplace manager, in consultation with the Organisational Culture Unit, and actions taken shall be consistent with the hierarchy of controls.

The following shall be used as primary options for controlling work-related violence risks:

- appropriate design and/or modification of the work environment work-related violence prevention principles shall be considered when planning, designing, constructing, commissioning and occupying any facility including:

- target hardening of high risk areas (lock down, access control);
- crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles are applied in the design, planning, construction and refurbishment of all capital works and workplaces including furniture, fittings and fixtures;
- increased surveillance (natural surveillance and/or closed-circuit television/body cameras);
- isolation or separation from hazards (staff refuge);
- environmental considerations to divert or reduce aggressive behaviour (furniture, fittings, temperature, lighting)
- maintain and update register of work-related violence incidents.

Appropriate design and/or modification of work procedures - design of work procedures shall consider preventative strategies including:

- work flow, skill mix, staffing levels, access and availability to security, and/ or supportive response measures (e.g. duress alarms);
- community engagement – Community and cultural factors shall be considered when designing work practices and service requirements. This may include media and marketing campaigns addressing expectations of service deliveries and appropriate standards of behaviour;
- interagency relationships and work practices - work practices involving external agencies, such as Queensland Police Service shall consider strategies to prevent and protect staff and others from the likelihood of violent and aggressive behaviour;
- client violence risk assessment - the potential for violence is an ongoing process and shall be assessed at each interaction. The assessment will determine the safest and most appropriate responses for managing that individual client. The assessment of potentially aggressive clients shall be documented, readily accessible and communicated to all relevant staff involved in the management of the client e.g. Alerts in CISr and/or Qi;
- maintain and update a register of sites, organisations, persons with involvement in work-related violence;
- training and awareness - All staff shall be provided with adequate information, training and supervision to ensure work practices are designed and undertaken in the safest possible way and the risk of work-related violence is prevented or minimised. Management will ensure all staff undertake appropriate training. Training may be provided in the following areas:
 - violence prevention measures (part of the induction training package before starting work)
 - workplace policy and procedures, including emergency response;
 - de-escalating aggression – identifying signs of aggression, verbal and non-verbal, communication strategies, encouraging reasoning, listening carefully and acknowledging concerns;
 - communication skills;
 - situational risk assessment – when visiting work-sites;
 - positive behaviour strategies and managing behaviours of concern.

Step 4: Monitoring and Reviewing Work-related Violence and Aggressive Behaviour Risks

Review of the implemented controls and risk assessment process should occur on a planned basis to ensure their effectiveness and to ensure that no new risks are introduced. The frequency of monitoring and review should be conducted at least six monthly, or more frequently as determined by the level of risk identified and effectiveness of control measures.

A copy of the last completed Work-Related Violence risk assessment and determined action plan will be available to workers locally within the work unit/facility and centrally with the relevant work unit. The findings and control measure recommendations will be reported

through Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) Committee structures for the attention of the responsible office.

Step 5: Responding to Work-Related Violence and Aggressive Behaviour

In the event of work-related violence or aggressive behaviour, OIR employees should assess the situation and determine whether it is safe to remain and attempt to de-escalate, or whether they are at risk and need to take actions to remove themselves and other OIR employees. Employees who are exposed to work-related violence or aggression should always contact their manager or colleague as soon as it is practical and safe to do so.

Where determined that it is safe to remain in the situation:

- attempt to de-escalate by using de-escalation training provided by OIR (if applicable);
- use calm verbal and non-verbal communication, and avoid any language or behaviour that could incite further violence;
- where possible and safe for all involved, seek support from another staff member
- report the incident as soon as possible as per the identified process.

Where determined that the situation puts an OIR employee at risk:

- ensure your own safety;
- retreat to a safe location immediately;
- make all reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of other OIR employees and affected parties, or seek help;
- where possible, ask the aggressor to leave the premises;
- if the situation involves serious threats or acts of violence or aggression, call the police emergency number 000.

Managers and employees have a number of responsibilities following an incident of work-related violence or aggression. The first priority should be to the health and safety of OIR employees involved in the incident. In the event of a manager being exposed to work-related violence, a peer or direct senior manager is responsible for undertaking the responsibilities of a manager.

Immediately following an incident of work-related violence, managers will:

- refer to the Managing Traumatic and Distressing Workplace Incidents Guideline for direction on providing support for those impacted by work-related violence;
- report the details of the event, including all affected employees;
- encourage affected employees to complete an [incident report form](#) for investigation;
- if the affected employee(s) does not wish to (or is unable to) complete an incident report, advise them that you will complete one on their behalf;
- discuss reporting the incident to the police with the affected employee(s) and then take appropriate action to either contact police or support the employee as required.

Immediately following an incident of work-related violence, employees will:

- contact your manager, or another manager on duty, to formally notify them of the event, provide necessary details, and discuss required action;
- report important details of the event;
- complete and submit an [incident report form](#);
- report the incident to the police as necessary.

Appropriate efforts should be made to follow up incidents of work-related violence. It is important to note that people may not exhibit signs of distress straight away – it may take weeks or sometimes even months for the onset of symptoms related to the incident.

In following up incidents of work-related violence, a manager must:

- continue to refer to the Managing Traumatic and Distressing Workplace Incidents Guideline for direction in supporting affected employees;
- undertake any relevant investigation to establish facts and course of events;
- following investigation, ensure all information about the event has been appropriately recorded;
- where appropriate, talk to the aggressor about their behaviour;
- determine what actions need to be taken to prevent similar events in the future and review/amend risk control measures;
- ensure impacted staff are advised of the action taken.

In following up incidents of work-related violence, employees must:

- assist with any investigation resulting from an incident of work-related violence by providing any information that could assist in the prevention of similar future incidents.

Supporting Documents

- Work-related Violence Policy
- Work-related Violence Statement of Principles (available to the public on WorkSafe)
- Responding to Work-related Violence Fact Sheet
- Managing Traumatic and Distressing Incidents Guidelines

DEFINITIONS

Work-Related Violence and Aggressive Behaviour

Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. Includes verbal or physical aggression directed at workers from Office of Industrial Relations or members of the public.

Hazard

A situation or thing that has the potential to harm a person.

Hierarchy of Controls

A range of control measures designed to manage workplace hazards and the associated risks.

Risk

The possibility that harm (death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard.

Risk Control

Taking action to eliminate health and safety risks so far as is reasonably practicable, and if that is not possible, minimising the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. Eliminating a hazard will also eliminate any risks associated with that hazard.

Review dates

This guideline should be reviewed yearly when all other policies are reviewed, or if regular or serious incidents arise that suggest it needs to be revisited.

Document owner	Health and Wellbeing, Organisational Culture Unit
Policy approved by	Board of Management
Date policy approved	22 June 2018
Review Date	22 May 2019

Work-Related Violence and Prevention Management Flowchart

