

Violence at Work

Some workers are at an increased risk of violence either because of where they work, or the type of work that they do. The employer has a legal duty to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace, and safe and healthy systems of work. This includes taking all practicable measures to reduce the risk of violence.

Make it safe! Action for Health and Safety Reps

- Talk with your members, particularly those who have to work alone for at least some of the time, as they may be more vulnerable. Discuss with them their ideas and issues.
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken to identify risk factors such as: lone working on and off site and potential hazards.
- Investigate if jobs can be re-organised to provide a safer system of work, including ensuring there are adequate numbers of staff. Download the Workplace Violence Safety Audit to assist you www.ohsrep.org.au/hazards/bullying-violence/violence-at-work/
- Ensure that members report and document all incidents.
- Raise any concerns or issues of security with your employer as soon as possible.

What does the law say?

The employer has a duty to provide and maintain for employees, as far as reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to health. This includes providing a safe system of work, information, training and supervision. The employer has the duty to take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk to employees. The employer must consult with the OHS reps and the workers in these situations.

Who is at risk?

There are large numbers of workers who are potentially at risk of violence from third parties. These include:

- Police and other law enforcement officers
- Accident and emergency workers
- Corrective Service workers
- Security guards/crowd controllers
- Car parking attendants
- Retail workers
- Health services workers
- Community sector workers
- Teachers
- Hotel workers
- Employment consultants
- and many others, often incidentally, due to having money or goods on premises.

These workers all have the potential to confront or have confronted violent / potentially violent / drunk / aggressive / drug affected third parties or clients.

Workers that deal with members of the public who are in crisis or under extreme stress are vulnerable to workplace violence.

More information

For more information, visit the following websites and search on "violence":

SafeWork South Australia:
www.safework.sa.gov.au

International Labour Organisation (ILO):
www.ilo.org

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland:
www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/

WorkSafe Victoria: www.workcover.vic.gov.au

WorkCover NSW: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Publications/OHS/RiskManagement/pages/wpviolenceprevention.aspx

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU):
www.actu.asn.au/Campaigns/HealthSafety/

If you have an Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) concern at your workplace you should inform your OH&S Representative. An elected OH&S Rep has legal powers to take action regarding an ongoing known and unaddressed OH&S violation which a Delegate does not. If you do not know who your OH&S Rep is at your workplace contact your Delegate for that information.

If there is no OH&S Rep at your workplace contact the ASU office for specific OH&S advice.

How the ASU can help

The ASU provides advice and information to members regarding workplace rights and obligations. ASU members can contact their State ASU office for more information. If required the ASU provides members with individual representation.

To obtain the contact details of your local ASU Branch visit the ASU national website www.asu.asn.au or contact the JSA National Project Coordinator on (03) 9342 1400 or help@employmentservicesunion.org.au

www.employmentservicesunion.org.au