

Tip sheet

Violence at work

One of the underpinning principles of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 is that people should not be harmed while they are at work. Your team leaders have a responsibility for ensuring your workplace is safe – but violence can come from unexpected places.



Types of violence

Annoyance and frustration can often build if left unchecked into aggression; or escalate to violence.

Violence at work takes many forms, including:

- threats and intimidation;
- verbal and physical abuse;
- physical assault.

This violence can come from angry customers/clients, colleagues or pedestrians near your worksite. When your team experiences any sort of violence, it can have significant effects.

Impacts of violence

The New Zealand Medical Journal has published research examining the effects of exposure to violence. The study shows that women who experience severe physical violence are nearly four times more likely to report emotional distress.

The effect of violence will often last beyond the incident itself and can have a psychological impact. If you're then faced with going back to that environment day after day, it's important that you can openly communicate with your people leaders and get the support you need. This includes knowing what protocols are in place for your care and to prevent this happening again, and who you can talk to if you need further support.

Responding to violence

Sometimes – even with all the best policies and procedures in place – violence at work is unavoidable. If you find yourself in a harmful situation, here are some ways you can respond.

Be aware of your surroundings

Stay vigilant and report any suspicious behaviours promptly – before they develop into violence.

Prioritise your personal safety

Your wellbeing comes first; avoid direct confrontation if it jeopardises your safety.

Stay calm

Maintain your composure so you can think clearly and make effective decisions in a crisis.

Follow established protocols

Knowing what to do if you feel threatened is essential to know before it happens. Your workplace safety protocols and procedures are there to guide you, keep an eye out for any updates.

Alert your manager or the authorities

Quickly inform your manager/security of the situation so they can take charge. If this isn't possible and it's safe for you to do so, call emergency services.

Communication is key

Use clear and concise language when reporting the incident to ensure a swift response.

Know your exits

Familiarise yourself with emergency evacuation routes and designated safe areas.

Support colleagues

Help others to safety but avoid putting yourself in unnecessary danger.

Seek shelter if necessary

If it's not safe to evacuate, find a secure location and wait for authorities.

Post-incident support

Take advantage of available counselling or support services to address any emotional impact.

Vitae has a well-developed national trauma response and consultancy service. Our services are always available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for all our clients by calling 0508 664 981.

Contact

0508 664 981
assistance@vitae.co.nz
www.vitae.co.nz