



GUIDE TO PREVENTING

VIOLENCE, ROBBERY & THEFT

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Section 1: Introduction

WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

The Violence in the Workplace Regulations define violence as “threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviour that gives an employee reasonable cause to believe that the employee is at risk of physical injury, and conduct or attempted conduct of a person that endangers the physical health or physical safety of an employee.”

No one should feel threatened or unsafe at work. Unfortunately in Nova Scotia, workplace violence happens all too often. Preventing it, and ensuring Nova Scotians feel safe on the job, is an important part of our efforts to build a safety culture in our province.

Workplace violence includes incidents involving the use of force, as well as threatening statements and behaviours that may lead to physical altercations. Being able to deal effectively with all types of violent incidents is critical for a retail business and its employees.

Did you know that?

- » Retail companies lose millions of dollars each year as a result of lost merchandise, stolen money, and property damage?
- » Prevention measures used to protect employees against workplace violence will also reduce store losses?
- » Employers are required by law to train employees to deal with the risk of workplace violence?
- » It is illegal for employers to pass the costs of store losses on to their employees?

Section 2: Overview

This booklet presents best practices drawn from organizations across Nova Scotia and Canada that will help you prevent workplace violence and deal with incidents effectively if they do occur. Most of the information in this booklet will be useful to both employers and employees; however, Section 3, Preventing Violence, is aimed specifically at employers. Section 4, Possible Scenarios in Retail, includes tips for both employers and employees.

Contributing organizations

The Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Division and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia have partnered with the Retail Council of Canada and many contributing organizations to produce this Guide to Preventing Violence Robbery and Theft. Special thanks to the Retail Gas Dealers' Association for reviewing this guide.

Special thanks to WorkSafeBC for its support in the development of this guide.

In many retail businesses, front-line employees are at risk from violent incidents on a daily basis. There are several reasons for this. In most operations, the public has free and easy access to the store and employees often need to deal with people they don't know. Retail businesses also keep cash on hand, display tempting merchandise, remain open during late hours, and employ young workers.

Key risks

The following are key risks for many retail businesses:

- » robbery and assault
- » shoplifting
- » abusive and difficult customers
- » unwelcome members of the public

Most employees want to do the best they can for their employers. When a potentially violent incident occurs, in the heat of the moment an employee may try to reduce the loss for the business and put themselves at risk. It is critical that employees understand that their safety is the first priority. There is no expectation for employees to be heroes. Money and merchandise can always be replaced; people can't.

Section 3: Preventing violence (for employers)

An overhead security camera records what's going on in the store and helps deter shoplifters and robbers.



Reducing the risk

Given the daily risks that many businesses face, retailers need specific plans for their stores to help protect employees and minimize the potential for violence. Retailers can reduce the potential for workplace violence using physical measures and procedures, such as:

- » careful store design
- » use of security devices - general and personal
- » employee education and training
- » employee scheduling and procedures for working alone

The best combination will depend on the type of retail store, location, and individual business practices.

Physical controls

Store design and security devices are sometimes referred to as physical controls. These are discussed further on page 11.

Procedural controls

Procedural controls include training, safe work procedures, and scheduling. These all have a big impact on how vulnerable employees are to violence. These are discussed further on pages 12-15.

Written procedures do not need to be complicated; they should focus on minimizing the risk for employees. Consider asking your employees - front-line workers often have good ideas about potential problems and how to solve them.

THE REGULATIONS:

The Violence in the Workplace Regulations can be found on the Occupational Health and Safety Division's web-site here: www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/healthandsafety/violenceintheworkplace

The best way to deal with workplace violence is to prevent it from happening at all. As a retail employer, you can do this by identifying potential risks in your business and then developing a violence prevention plan to address them. Your plan should describe the controls you will use to deal with those risks. Your controls will likely be a combination of careful store design, security devices to deter potentially violent persons, as well as training and safe work procedures for employees.

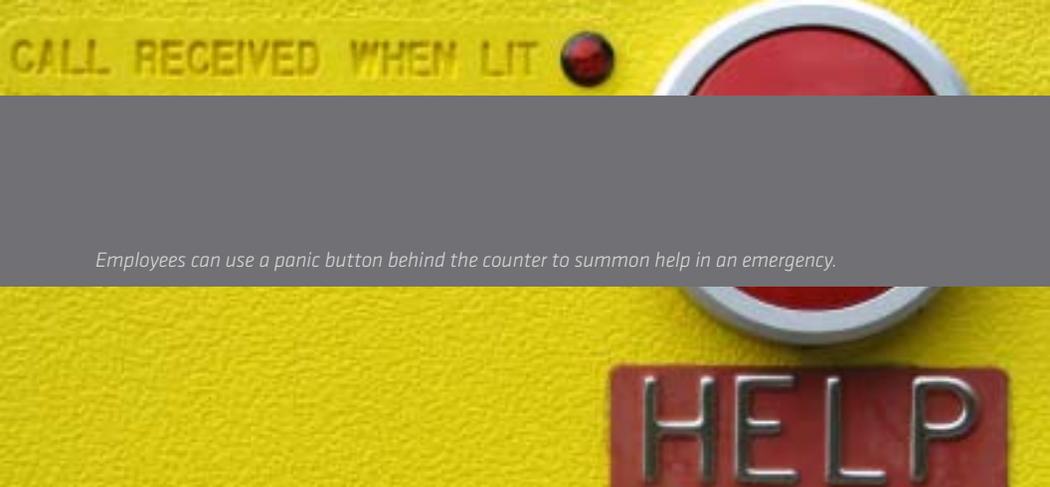
Your violence prevention plan should be specific to your worksite and type of business. Start by asking these basic questions:

- » How well prepared is your business currently?
- » What controls do you already have in place for violence prevention?
- » What likely scenarios are you trying to protect against?

This process of gathering and evaluating information about the specific risks to your employees is a workplace violence risk assessment.

Assessing the risk

Whenever there is interaction between employees and the public, there is a potential for violence to occur. In Nova Scotia the *Violence in the Workplace Regulations* require that all retail stores conduct a risk assessment.



Employees can use a panic button behind the counter to summon help in an emergency.

When doing a risk assessment, you will need to gather information about actual and potential violent incidents, and analyze your current violence prevention measures, including physical and procedural controls. Follow these basic guidelines:

- » Use your knowledge and experience of your business and work location to identify potential problems. Consider all aspects of your business
- » Consider previous incidents of violence in your workplace, as well as similar local workplaces. How many incidents have there been and what happened?
- » Ask for input from employees about current problems, concerns, and possible solutions
- » Consider the layout of your workplace
- » Evaluate all the information and prioritize the areas that need improvement

Your assessment should result in a list of improvements to minimize the risks to you and your employees.

Inspect your workplace

Some basic violence prevention strategies can go a long way towards making your store welcoming to customers but unattractive to thieves and robbers. When inspecting your workplace, consider the following physical controls:

- » store layout
- » design and position of sales counters
- » types and heights of shelving
- » how and where you display valuable merchandise
- » use of mirrors to see partly hidden areas of the store
- » use of door alarms
- » use of panic alarms or personal alarms

PREVENTING ROBBERY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Evaluate the use of violence prevention controls in your business - inspect your workplace using the Safety and Security Checklist in Appendix E. Contact your local community police officer for advice on robbery and theft prevention.

Involve your employees

No one knows your business better than you and your employees, so make a point of asking for their input about potential risks for violence. For example, when and where do employees feel they could be unsafe? Do they feel confident that they know how to handle a violent situation? Are they aware of individuals or situations that have been problems in the past?

Ask as many of your employees as possible to complete the Safety and Security Feedback Report (Appendix C). The report is designed to get employees and supervisors thinking about specific workplace violence issues, including where they feel vulnerable and where they think improvements could be made.

Group discussions with your employees may also be effective for getting their input; and a group setting may spark a greater exchange of concerns and ideas. You can use the Safety and Security Feedback Report to help guide discussions. Record all the information discussed. The idea is to get as much information as possible about workplace violence concerns and possible controls for your business.

If your company has a joint occupational health and safety committee or a health and safety representative, involve them in the process of assessing risks and developing controls.

Physical controls (store design and security devices)

An overhead mirror can let employees see all the aisles in the store



EMPLOYEE INPUT

Employees should complete the Safety and Security Feedback Report in Appendix C and give it to their employer or supervisor - they need to know what employees think about safety and security.

Set priorities and develop a written plan

Prioritize the potential risks you have identified so that you know which ones to address first. Use feedback from the Safety and Security Feedback Reports. Brainstorm with your employees, or a representative team, about how you can deal with each potential risk. Prepare a written plan, including a timeline for implementing controls.

Share the written plan with your employees

If you want employees to take violence prevention seriously, you need to show them that you are serious too. A simple one-page summary report explaining your violence prevention plan and timeline can help achieve this. The Safety and Security Checklist (Appendix E) is organized into categories such as "Visibility and lighting" and "Handling money and deposits." Consider using these categories to help organize your report.

Post the report in the staff room, where employees can read it. Hold a staff meeting to go over the plan and to discuss other possible strategies.

Implement the plan

Violence prevention can easily pay for itself. It probably won't cost much, if anything, to implement most of the solutions in your plan. In fact, many of the changes that you make to improve safety will also make your business more attractive to customers and improve sales and employee morale. Also, many of the controls that help prevent violence will also help prevent robbery and theft.

Consider including the following store design features and security devices in your violence prevention plan:

- » **Barriers** such as Plexiglas and wide counters help keep employees out of reach from customers
- » **Low shelves** ensure a good view within the store, making it more difficult for thieves to hide
- » **A safe with a time lock** is a good place to store cash and other valuables
- » **Product placement** can discourage shoplifting. Place expensive items behind the counter or in locked displays
- » **The cash register** should be near a window with clear views outside so the clerk is easily visible to the public (no posters on the window). The employee should be on a raised floor to allow clear views of the entire store, and should have more than one exit to avoid being blocked in easily
- » **A secure refuge area** such as a lockable office with a fish-eye lens in the door and a phone will allow employees to safely monitor the store
- » **Mirrors and clear sight lines** allow employees to see who is in the aisles or secluded parts of the store
- » **Visible security cameras** deter thieves and record all activities in the store
- » **Devices for employees to summon help in an emergency** include panic buttons, personal alarms carried by employees at high risk, and cell phones
- » **Door alarms** alert employees when someone has entered the store
- » **Good lighting** is useful both inside and outside the store
- » **Low landscaping** ensures good visibility, especially near entrances and exits, and beside walkways to parking areas
- » **Visible security workers** can be hired in cooperation with neighbouring businesses.
- » **Signage advertising controls** such as "Cash in time-lock safe" and "Security cameras in use" deter would-be thieves

Procedural controls (training and safe work procedures)

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and ensuring that employees are adequately trained before they start a job. All employees need hands-on training in the tasks they will perform and ongoing supervision to ensure that the violence prevention program is successful.

Certain activities (for example, opening and closing the store, handling money, and working alone) carry a greater risk of violence than other activities, and employees may need to follow a safe work procedure to eliminate or reduce the risk. Written safe work procedures specific to your store will help with employee training.

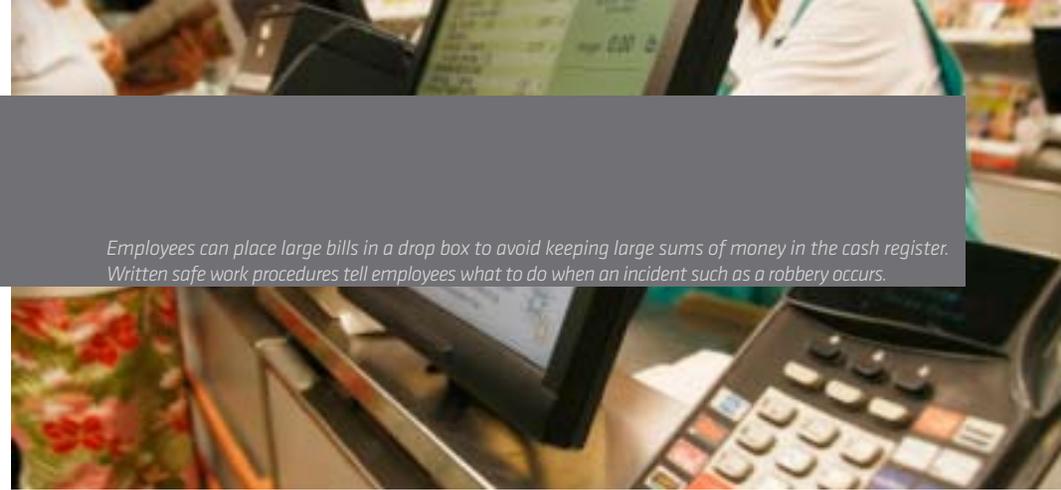
Employees require training in recognizing and handling potentially violent incidents. This includes information on customer behaviours to watch out for and simple actions that may prevent a situation from getting worse. For instance, robbers do not want to be identified, so encouraging employees to make eye contact and greet everyone who enters the store may decrease the chance of robbers following through with their plans. The following sections describe common retail scenarios, and include tips and guidelines that you can use to develop written safe work procedures.

Opening and closing the store

Retail employees are most likely to experience violent incidents at opening and closing times. Although employees may be in a hurry to get started or wrap up the workday, they should be especially vigilant and follow opening and closing procedures. If an employee doesn't know the procedures, he or she should ask the supervisor or employer for training. Employees should also know where the written procedures are so they can refer to them. Encourage employees to offer advice on improving the procedures.

It also helps for employees to work in pairs at opening and closing, especially when doing the rounds at the end of a shift. Cash handling may be part of the opening and closing routines. Employees should ensure that there are no customers in the store if this is the case, and that all entrances and exits are secure and locked.

Employees can place large bills in a drop box to avoid keeping large sums of money in the cash register. Written safe work procedures tell employees what to do when an incident such as a robbery occurs.



Handling money

All retail businesses should have safe work procedures for handling money in the store or when making bank deposits. Ensure that employees follow these guidelines when handling cash in the store:

- » Make sure cash registers and cash handling areas are located away from entrances and exits
- » Make sure sales counters are located so they are clearly visible from inside and outside the store
- » Keep as little cash in the cash register as possible
- » Place large bills in a drop box, safe, or locked room that is out of sight.
- » Fit counter safes with time-delay locks

Ensure that employees follow these guidelines when making bank deposits:

- » Avoid making bank deposits at night
- » Vary the time and route for making deposits
- » Don't carry money in bags that make it obvious you're carrying cash or that are marked with the company logo
- » Make deposits with a co-worker, if possible. The co-worker should face away from the depository to keep an eye on other people in the area



Working alone

Working alone presents additional risks. Because working alone is more dangerous it is important to have special measures in place. These should include:

- » Specific time intervals during the shift (depending on the risk) when someone will check the employee's well-being
- » A specific check at the end of the shift
- » The actions that will be taken if the employee cannot be contacted or does not phone in at the appropriate time

There are many ways to set up a check system for employees who work alone. For example, 24-hour phone service providers are available for checks. The service provider will expect calls from your employees during their shifts. If an employee does not call, and does not answer a direct call, the service provider will respond immediately. Other systems involve remotely monitored security timers that employees must activate at given intervals. If there is no activation, the security company will initiate a call, drive-by, or other response.

All employees who work alone should have specific training in procedures for working alone and any check systems that are in place. Procedures should be reviewed annually or whenever there is a change in your business arrangements or practices that may increase the risk or affect the current procedure.

If working alone is part of your business, your employees should follow these guidelines:

- » Keep busy with tasks away from the sales counter when there are no customers in the store
- » Offer a friendly greeting to people who enter the store
- » Keep an eye on anyone who is loitering. Ask if they need assistance
- » Ensure that emergency phone numbers are next to or on the phone
- » Don't leave back doors open and unattended
- » Keep the store neat and clean
- » Don't empty garbage at night. Garbage bins are often in secluded areas
- » Stay alert and call the police if you see any suspicious activity or people around the store

Networking

Networking with other businesses in your area will help you combine your knowledge and resources, and share information on best practices. Networking provides a means of support and helps improve the neighbourhood, making it safer for everyone. You and your neighbours may wish to share costs for initiatives such as:

- » Enhanced outdoor lighting
- » Motion detectors
- » Visible security staff
- » Violence prevention training

Neighbouring businesses can use informal or advertised watch systems to keep an eye on each other during the business day. Contact your community business association and start a discussion about violence prevention. You can also contact your community police office for ideas on how to improve your immediate business area and build a safer working community.

Section 4: Possible scenarios in retail (tips for employers and employees)

If you are working in a retail business, either as an employer or an employee, you may find yourself face to face with violence (for example, during a robbery), or in a situation that could become violent (for example, when dealing with a difficult or abusive customer). This section provides tips that will help front-line workers protect themselves and prevent potentially violent situations from getting worse. Employers can also use these guidelines to develop safe work procedures.

WHAT ARE THEFT AND ROBBERY?

Theft refers to someone stealing something in secret. *Robbery* usually refers to someone stealing something using force or the threat of violence.

Shoplifting (theft)

Shoplifting is the theft of goods that are on display in a store. It is easier, and safer to prevent shoplifting than it is to deal with a shoplifter.

Watch out for people who...

- » Seem nervous or avoid eye contact
- » Wander around the store without buying anything
- » Leave the store and come back soon after
- » Stay in a part of the store where it is difficult to see them
- » Keep looking around or watching you

To discourage potential shoplifters...

- » Greet and acknowledge anyone who enters the store
- » Be friendly and polite to all customers. Ask whether they need help
- » If someone looks suspicious, make friendly eye contact with him or her
- » Keep the store clean and orderly
- » Know where shoplifting is most likely to occur
- » Make your store a less desirable target. Review the ideas in Section 3, starting on page 7

Robbery

If you suspect that someone is shoplifting...

- » Play it safe! Don't be a hero; your life is more important than money or merchandise
- » Don't chase the suspect. This can quickly lead to violence. In fact, some employers have a policy of disciplining or even firing employees who chase a thief
- » Don't accuse the person of stealing
- » Don't try to physically stop the suspect
- » Don't lock the door to keep the suspect from leaving. A person who feels trapped is more likely to panic and become violent
- » Stay at least an arm's length away from the suspect
- » Give the suspect a chance to pay or put back the item. Be sure you know what was taken and where the suspect hid it, and then politely ask, "Are you ready to pay?" or "Would you like a bag for [the item]?"
- » If you feel frightened or uneasy, don't continue to confront the suspect. Get help when it's safe to do so. Alert your supervisor or any other employees who can help you
- » Call the police if you sense a threat of violence or if highly valuable items are being stolen

After the shoplifter has left...

Fill out the Violent Incident Report (Appendix D) and give it to your supervisor or employer. This will also provide valuable information for the police.

Make a point of trying to describe the suspect's footwear. Many thieves and robbers will change their clothing afterwards, but not their shoes.

Robberies typically present the greatest risk of violence to retail workers and customers. Making your store a more difficult target (see Section 3) will help protect your employees from possible violent situations and provide a safer environment for your customers.

To prevent robbery...

- » Dress neatly and keep the store neat and clean. A tidy, orderly store is inviting to customers but not to robbers
- » Keep the store well lit. Report any burned-out bulbs to your manager or employer
- » Be friendly. Make eye contact and offer customers a friendly greeting as they enter the store
- » Stay alert. Watch for people showing the same behaviours as potential shoplifters
- » If someone suspicious is standing in line, ask the customer ahead of the suspicious person, "Are you together?" The customer will usually turn around and look at the other person
- » If you see something suspicious, call the police. Never try to handle it yourself
- » Encourage the police to stop by periodically
- » Handle cash carefully and keep the amount of cash in registers to a minimum. If a customer tries to pay with a large bill, politely ask for a smaller one. Explain that you keep very little cash on hand

Difficult or irate customers

CRIME PREVENTION WORKS

Criminals are always looking for ways to beat crime prevention systems, but there's only so far that they're willing to go. You can lower your chances of being robbed or being involved in a violent incident by remembering one simple rule: the greater the risk of getting caught, the lower the likelihood that someone will commit the offence.

After the robber has left...

- » Don't chase or follow the robber
- » Lock the store
- » Call the police and follow their instructions; then call your supervisor or employer to report the robbery
- » Ask any witnesses to stay until the police arrive. Try to make them as comfortable as possible while they wait
- » Protect the crime scene. Do not allow anyone to touch anything that might be considered evidence, and do not resume business until the police are finished
- » Do not discuss the details of the robbery with anyone until after the police have taken statements from everyone

Use the Violent Incident Report (Appendix D) to record information and share it with the police; then give it to your supervisor or employer.

In a retail business, you will eventually have to deal with difficult or irate customers. Such customers may become aggressive, leaving you feeling threatened and vulnerable.

You can ask a difficult customer to leave the premises. If the customer refuses, you can call 9-1-1 and say, "I have a hostile customer who refuses to leave." However, don't ask someone to leave if you feel that it might make him or her more aggressive.

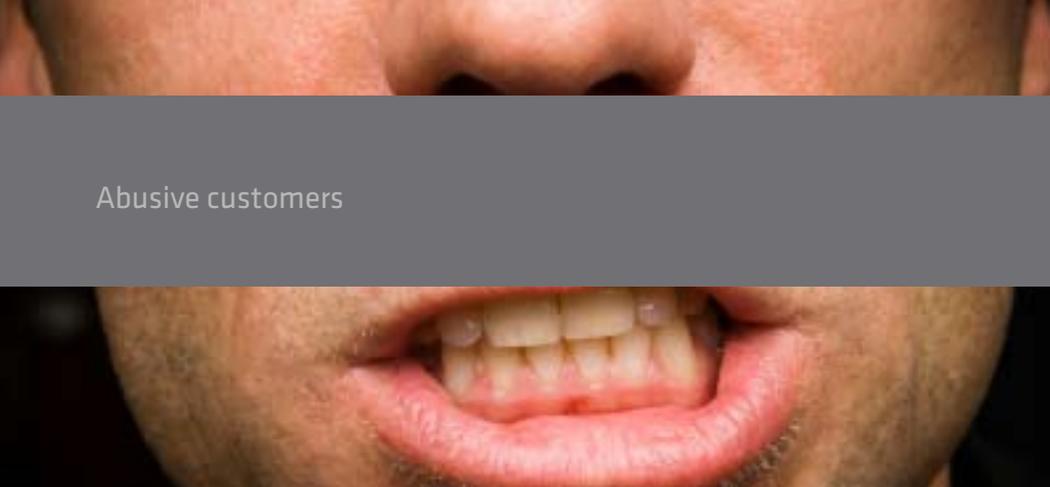
Defusing a situation

- » Ask questions to help you understand what the customer's concerns are
- » If you are an employee and you are unable to address the customer's complaint, encourage the customer to speak with your manager or someone else who has authority to make decisions or changes
- » If a customer is angry about being asked for ID for cigarettes, point to the ID requirement posters and stickers, and explain that you are only obeying the law
- » Focus on being respectful and courteous. Try to remain calm, and try to calm the customer
- » Avoid focusing on who is right or wrong. Focus instead on what will satisfy the customer and on finding ways to help the customer save face
- » Stick to facts, not opinions or judgments. Ignore insults. Keep bringing the discussion back to the real issue
- » Listen carefully, and try to put yourself in the customer's shoes
- » If the customer is disruptive and noisy, and if it is safe to do so, move to a quieter location, possibly with the help of a co-worker
- » If you cannot calm the customer, ask for help

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

If a customer becomes agitated and it seems like the situation will escalate:

- » Don't offer solutions and don't argue
- » Get help immediately
- » Ask a supervisor for assistance or give the customer the name and phone number of someone to contact



Abusive customers

Abusive conduct does not necessarily include physical violence, but physical violence often starts with abusive conduct. Abusive conduct includes:

- » Demeaning, degrading, intimidating, offensive, or otherwise abusive expressions
- » Unwelcome sexual attention
- » Bullying
- » Stalking

No form of abuse is acceptable. If you are faced with abusive conduct, follow these guidelines:

- » Tell the customer to stop. Do this right away, before the unwanted behaviour becomes a pattern
- » Tell the customer why the behaviour is unacceptable. If the customer persists, ask him or her to leave
- » Report the incident to your employer or the person who normally deals with this type of complaint
- » If you believe you are being followed or stalked, call the police
- » If the threat or abuse is from someone directly connected to your personal life, do not be afraid to call the police, especially if the situation is escalating

Unwelcome members of the public

Retail workers face many difficult situations, especially if the store is open for longer hours. Employers should plan for and train their employees on how to handle situations such as:

- » People loitering outside the store or gathering inside the store
- » Gangs or groups using the storefront as a meeting place
- » Homeless people at the store entrance asking for spare change or using the doorway as a shelter for the night
- » Drug addicts using the storefront area or washrooms

In situations such as these, well-meaning employees may talk to the people involved to try and solve the problem. Doing so, however, may actually increase the risk of a violent incident. *Employers and managers should make it clear to employees that they must not attempt to deal with these situations alone.* Instead, employees should report their concerns to a supervisor or ask the police to come to the store.

DEALING WITH TRESPASSERS

If you think someone might be hiding in a back room or washroom, don't call out. Go to a safe place and phone for help.

If you find someone in an unauthorized area, don't block the exit. A person who feels trapped is more likely to panic and become violent.

If you are responding to a break-in, do not enter the building unless you know it is safe. Call the police and wait for them to arrive first.

Remember that you have the legal right to ask people to leave the premises.

Employers and managers should also consider taking steps prevent these situations:

- » Hire a private security firm. Some business associations have programs to help stores with their security needs. Neighbouring businesses can work together to pay for security guards or patrol cars
- » Post signs prohibiting loitering and stating that washrooms will be closed during the night shift
- » Limit the number of people in the store
- » Improve lighting in and around the store
- » Consider removing services that could encourage groups to gather, such as automatic teller machines (ATMs) and pay phones

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.

If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

Sometimes when somebody is in the store, it just doesn't feel right. You may notice something odd about a person's appearance, body language, behaviour, or mannerisms, almost subconsciously, which may make you feel concerned. This person could be in the store to shoplift, rob the store, or worse.

When a suspicious person is in the store, assess the situation carefully. Follow these guidelines:

- » Listen to your instincts. Remember that your safety is more important than the goods in the store
- » Consider contacting the police or your security service. Describe the situation, the suspicious person, and how long they have been in the store
- » If someone has been in the store for a long time and they seem to be looking for something, ask loudly whether they need help. Keep your distance - stay at least an arm's length away
- » Consider whether you need to move to the store's secure area, where you can safely monitor the store (for example, to a lockable office with a fish-eye lens installed in the door and a phone)
- » When the suspicious person has left, write a description so that other employees can watch out for this person. This will also help you recognize the person if he or she returns

Employers can make their stores less of a target by following these guidelines: Ensure that the store has good lighting and good visibility.

- » Keep valuable goods behind the counter or in locked displays
- » Post signs indicating that there is little or no cash in the store
- » Install clearly visible cameras
- » Make eye contact with and greet everyone who enters the store

Even after an employer takes steps to prevent violence in a retail business, violent incidents may still occur. If this happens, it's important to act quickly to minimize the effects on employees. Employers should provide support to victims, report and investigate the incident, and revise the violence prevention plan to prevent a similar incident in the future.

Provide first aid and other medical attention if necessary

TAKE EMPLOYEES SERIOUSLY

Never dismiss or downplay complaints or reports of violence. Employees should never be told or feel that they have to deal with the problem by themselves.

If an employee is seriously hurt during an incident, the employer must do the following:

- » Provide first aid
- » Arrange transport to a medical facility
- » Notify the Occupational Health and Safety Division within 7 days. You must also notify the Worker's Compensation Board within 5 business days

If it is a less serious injury, provide first aid and refer to a doctor if necessary. If there has been possible contact with blood or other body fluids, make sure the employee gets professional medical assistance as soon as possible.

Make sure employees know where first aid supplies are kept and how to get help if they are hurt but don't need an ambulance.

All businesses must have an adequate first aid kit available. For more information on first aid requirements please see our guide found here: www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/healthandsafety/docs/FirstAidGuide.pdf

Provide a debrief session after a traumatic incident

An employer must provide an employee who has been exposed to or affected by violence at the workplace with an appropriate debriefing and must advise the employee to consult a health professional of the employee's choice for treatment or counselling. While the employer must make time available for the affected employee to seek this treatment, the employer is not required to pay for the treatment.

Watch for signs and symptoms

A traumatic incident such as armed robbery can be emotionally and mentally damaging. Employees who have gone through a traumatic incident may:

- » Feel anxious, moody, or irritable
- » Feel numb or dazed
- » Have trouble concentrating or making decisions
- » Be afraid to go near the scene of the incident
- » Not want to be alone
- » Not want to be with other people
- » Have flashbacks, nightmares, or disturbing memories of the incident
- » Vomit more than a couple of hours after the incident
- » Experience uncontrolled, spontaneous crying
- » Experience changes in appetite and sleeping patterns

Employers should be sensitive to these warning signs and symptoms. Violent incidents can seriously affect the well-being of employees, and may put people at a greater risk of workplace accidents. You may notice an increase in time off. Timely, positive follow-up shows employees that they are supported in the workplace and that steps are being taken to protect them. If an employee shows signs or symptoms after being involved in a violent incident, or the signs or symptoms get worse, further professional help may be necessary.

Report and investigate the incident

Report incidents such as assaults or robberies to the police right away. You also need to document and investigate all incidents of workplace violence to determine their causes and the actions needed to prevent them in the future. The Violent Incident Report in Appendix D will help you to document any incidents of workplace violence.

Goals of investigation

Incident investigations help determine the causes of an incident so you can take steps to ensure that it does not happen again. As much as possible, an investigation must:

- » Determine the causes of the incident
- » Identify any conditions, acts, or procedures that contributed to the incident
- » Find ways to prevent similar incidents

The incident investigation should answer the following questions:

- » Who was involved?
- » Where and when did the incident happen?
- » What happened? Include as much detail as possible
- » Why did the incident happen?
- » How will the incident be dealt with?

Section 6: Appendices

This section includes the appendices listed in the following table.

Appendix A: Some do's and don'ts for preventing retail violence

Appendix B: Travelling to and from work

Appendix C: Safety and security feedback report

Appendix D: Violent incident report

Appendix E: Safety and security checklist

Appendix F: Tell us what you think

Incident investigation documents

Keep copies of all documents and reports related to the incident. You can use this information to help improve your violence prevention strategy. It may also be useful if you and your employees need to file a workers' compensation claim. It is a good idea for all the employees involved in the incident to document it from their perspectives. Use the Violent Incident Report in Appendix D to collect information from employees.

Follow these guidelines to help prevent similar types of incidents from happening again:

- » Inform employees who were not involved in the incident and welcome their ideas to prevent another incident
- » Determine if there is anything more you can do to protect your employees and business from this kind of incident. For example, can you improve lighting, security, or the layout of the store?
- » Update your plan for preventing and dealing with workplace violence, and implement any necessary changes. For example, if employees need special training to deal with potentially threatening situations, include it in your plan
- » Assign someone to make the necessary changes, and ensure that the changes are made

DO

- » Be polite and friendly to all customers.
- » Make eye contact and greet customers as they enter the store
- » Look for signs that customers are upset or under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- » Learn to recognize customers who are likely to cause trouble
- » Stay calm. Listen to customers and respond calmly
- » Try to steer customer anger away from you. For example, if a customer is angry because you won't sell him or her cigarettes, explain that you are just following the law
- » Encourage customers who are angry or upset to talk to the manager. If the manager is not available, give the customer a phone number to call
- » Make sure important signs stay posted. For example, the front door might have signs that say: "Store has limited cash after dark" and "Time-lock safe – Clerk cannot open"
- » Keep emergency numbers on hand. Stick them on each phone

DON'T

- » Trade insults with customers or react to their anger
- » Take customer complaints personally
- » Talk down to customers
- » Try to physically stop or hold someone
- » Put up displays, signs, or posters that block the view of the cash register or exit doors from inside or outside the store (Robbers hate to perform for an audience)

Remember that you can't control other people. The best thing you can do is control your own feelings, words, and actions.

Safety doesn't begin and end with your work shift. Include safety and prevention in everything you do, including travel to and from work.

If you are driving

- » Lock your doors and roll up your windows before entering the parking lot
- » Scan the area for suspicious persons. Have a plan ready in case you are uncomfortable with the situation
- » Park in well-lit areas. Avoid alleys, wooded areas, and tunnels
- » Avoid walking to your vehicle alone after work, or at least have someone watch you from the window if you do

If you are using public transit

- » Plan to arrive at the bus stop just before the bus arrives
- » Avoid isolated or poorly lit bus stops
- » If you see suspicious people at your stop, get off at the next stop
- » If possible, have someone meet you when you arrive at your stop

If you are attacked or robbed

- » If someone attacks you, scream as loudly and long as possible, and run to the nearest well-lit area
- » If someone grabs your purse, deposit bag, or other property, do not resist and do not chase the robber
- » Call the police immediately, and try to remember the description and mannerisms of the attacker
- » Write down any information about the attacker as soon as possible

General information

Have you ever been a victim of violence in this workplace? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, what was the nature of the incident (for example, verbal threats, hitting, or offensive correspondence)?

Who was the offender (for example, a customer, co-worker, contractor, or a name if known)?

Do you feel safe from violence at work? Yes ___ No ___
Why?

Is help available if there is a violent incident? Yes ___ No ___

Likelihood of violence

Do you think violence is more likely on certain days (for example, Saturdays or when there is a community event)? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, when and why?

Likelihood of violence cont.

Do you think violence is more likely at certain times of day (for example, at opening or late at night)? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, when and why?

Do you think violence is more likely to occur in certain places (for example, the parking lot, sales counter, or back door)? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, where and why?

Violence prevention

What do you think could be done to minimize the risk of violence?

Are there any situations on the job in which you feel particularly vulnerable?
Yes ___ No ___
If yes, what are they?

Have you been given previous training in how to deal with workplace violence?
Yes ___ No ___
If yes, what kind of training did you receive?

Please present this completed report to your employer or supervisor.

General information

Your name:
Today's date:
Workplace branch or location:
Witness information (names and contact numbers):

The incident

Date of incident:
Time of incident:

Where did the incident happen (for example, the sales counter, stockroom, or hallway)?

What type of incident was it (for example, verbal abuse, physical threat, pushing, slapping, or robbery)?

Describe what happened. Include factors that led up to the incident.

Did you receive first aid or other medical attention? Yes ___ No ___

Has this incident been reported to the police or security? Yes ___ No ___ Don't know ___

If available: Police file # _____

The incident cont.

How has this incident affected you (for example, missed work, emotional trauma, or physical injury)?

The offender
Offender's name (if known):

Offender's relationship to you (for example, a customer, co-worker, spouse, ex-girlfriend, or ex-boyfriend):

Describe the offender:

Male ___ Female ___ Age:

Height:

Weight:

Complexion:

Any other information (for example, accent, hair colour, skin colour, tattoos, clothing, or footwear):

Has the offender been involved in any previous violent incidents that you know of?
Yes ___ No ___

Describe any other relevant information, including suggestions for preventing a similar incident:

Please present this completed report to your employer or supervisor.

Potential risk factors

Yes No N/A

Visibility and lighting

- Can employees see in and out of the store or do posters, signs and bushes block their view?
- Are employees visible to potential witnesses outside?
- Do mirrors help employees see the whole store?
- Does lighting ensure that would-be thieves or robbers will be recognizable?

General store impression

- Does the worksite look cared for? Is there graffiti or vandalism?
- Are fences and other security measures well maintained?
- Are employees dressed to suit the general appearance of the store?

Building layout and design

- Is it easy to distinguish public areas from private areas such as offices?
- Is access to employee-only areas controlled with locks?
- Is the cash-handling area separate from the general workplace?
- Do counters have an elevated place for cash registers?
- Are anti-jump barriers fitted in front of cash-handling devices?
- Is alternative access to the building blocked (aside from fire exits)?
- Is public access to washrooms controlled?
- Are there bushes, or unlit or overgrown areas, where someone could hide?
- Are any areas not visible to employees?
- Are unoccupied rooms locked?

Signage and emergency information

- Are emergency numbers posted in a prominent place or on phones?
- Are robbery prevention signs prominently displayed? (For example: "Area monitored by video camera;" "Store has less than \$40 after dark;" and "Time-Lock Safe - Clerk Cannot Open")
- Is there a coloured height chart next to the entrance?

Tools and equipment

- Are knives and other sharp objects kept out of sight of customers?
- Can anyone grab and use tools or other items as weapons against employees?
- Are tools and equipment locked away when not in use?

Security guards and equipment

Yes No N/A

- Are there door alarms to alert employees that someone is entering the store?
- Are security guards or buddy systems available at your location?
- Is a closed-circuit television or surveillance camera installed?
- Is a silent, centrally monitored holdup alarm installed?

Customer service

- Do employees acknowledge customers with a friendly greeting, smile, and make eye contact?
- If you have multiple cash registers, are those nearest the entry closed first?

Employees working alone

- Does someone contact employees regularly to ensure that they are okay?
- Is there a plan if the employee does not respond to a contact such as a phone check?
- Are back doors ever open or unlocked when an employee is alone?
- Do employees take garbage out alone at night? Is the garbage bin in a well-lit place?

Handling money and deposits

- Are cash-handling areas positioned away from entries and exits?
- Is it standard practice to keep as little cash in the till as possible?
- Are large bills put into a drop box, safe, or strongroom that is out of sight?
- If you have counter safes, are they fitted with time-delay locks?
- Do employees make deposits at night or alone?
- When employees make deposits together, does one co-worker face away from the depository to keep an eye on other people in the area?
- Does the time and routine for making deposits vary from day to day to make it less predictable?
- Do employees carry cash in a bag that has the company logo or otherwise makes it obvious that they are carrying cash?

Files and records

Are confidential files and records kept in a locked room?
 Are filing cabinets containing confidential records locked?

Opening and closing

Do employees work in pairs at opening and closing, especially when doing the rounds at the end of a shift?
 Do your written procedures for opening and closing emphasize personal safety?
 For example, "Don't count the cash from the till at the sales counter"

Travelling to and from work

Do employees have the option of asking for an escort to walk to their cars or the bus stop?
 Can employees park nearby and within sight, especially at night?
 Is evening or night parking available for employees in nearby spaces normally reserved for customers?

Regular checks

Do you conduct risk assessments for violence at least every 5 years or whenever there are significant changes in your workplace?
 Do you conduct an assessment whenever there is a violent incident?

Note: Security must never conflict with fire and other safety requirements. Never impede the ability of employees and customers to leave the building.

Help us improve this booklet

We want to know if this booklet is useful to you.
 Please complete the form below and fax it to 1-902-424-5640
 On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) please rate the following:

| STRONGLY DISAGREE | | | | | STRONGLY AGREE |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| The topics in the booklet are relevant to your work. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| The information is useful. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| The information is interesting. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| There is enough general information. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| There is enough health and safety information. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| The information is easy to read. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| The information is easy to understand. | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

Tell us what you think about this booklet

Do you like the size of this booklet? Yes ___ No ___
Suggestions?

Do you have any suggestions or comments on how we could improve this booklet?

Is there anything in this booklet that you will implement or have already implemented as a result of reading it?

Which of the following are you?

- Employer / Owner _____
- Supervisor _____
- Employee _____
- Health and safety personnel _____
- Parent / Family member _____
- Other _____

Please indicate the number of people that work in your store or company:

- 1-5 _____
- 6-10 _____
- 11-20 _____
- 21-50 _____
- 51-100 _____
- over 100 _____

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA



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For more information on health and safety in Nova Scotia please see: worksafeforlife.ca