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DP 076

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VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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1. PURPOSE

This departmental policy establishes a comprehensive approach to dealing with violence in the workplace. It provides operational response procedures for dealing with incidents of actual and potential violence in the workplace or outside the workplace when performing official departmental duties. The departmental policy also provides warning signals that could help in determining the likelihood of an individual to commit violence.



2. POLICY

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) is committed to providing a workplace that does not tolerate violence in any form from any source. Therefore, PWGSC will:

1. respond to every incident of actual and potential violence immediately, in a manner proportionate to the seriousness of the situation;
2. continue to develop programs and tools designed to increase employee awareness about the issue of workplace violence;
3. provide training on how to respond to actual and potential incidents.



3. SCOPE

This departmental policy applies to all PWGSC employees, students, contractors, subcontractors, employees of other government departments reporting to PWGSC personnel, and persons hired through temporary help agencies. It applies not only to incidents which occur at work but may also apply to incidents of violence in the course of an employment relationship involving individuals away from the workplace or outside working hours, within PWGSC's authority, or in any situation where this protocol can help in providing a response or solution.



4. DEFINITIONS

Corporate Committee on Violence in the Workplace (comité ministériel sur la violence en milieu de travail) includes representatives from Labour Relations, Employee and Organization Assistance Programme (EOAP), Organizational Performance and Learning, Corporate Security, Corporate Environment, Health and Safety, Communications, and Legal Services.

Department (ministère) means Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Employee (employé) includes managers, indeterminate and term employees, seasonal and casual employees.

Manager (gestionnaire) means the immediate supervisor or manager of the work unit.

Operational Committee on Violence in the Workplace (comité opérationnel sur la violence en milieu de travail) includes representatives from Labour Relations, EOAP, Corporate Security, and Corporate Environment, Health and Safety.

Response Team (équipe d'intervention) includes representatives from Labour Relations, EOAP, Corporate Security, and Corporate Environment, Health and Safety.

Violence (violence) is defined as either verbal or physical behaviour that as a minimum threatens or intimidates someone (these are deemed acts of aggression). It is an expressed intention of inflicting injury or loss on a victim.

Workplace (lieu de travail) means any place where an employee is engaged in work for the Department.



5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Branch, is responsible for the following:

1. ensuring departmental compliance with this departmental policy;
2. arranging for periodic evaluation of this departmental policy and recommending changes as required.

2. The Corporate Committee on Violence in the Workplace, chaired by the Director, Human Relations and Compensation Services, reports to the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Human Resources. The Corporate Committee is responsible for the following:

1. defining and developing the departmental policy and procedures on violence in the workplace;
2. providing leadership and setting objectives;
3. developing program guidelines (e.g., training activities);
4. preparing generic training packages;
5. establishing communication strategies and promoting national awareness;
6. providing functional direction on design, development and implementation of operational committees;
7. monitoring implementation activities;
8. implementing and monitoring awareness and training nationally;
9. reporting annually through the ADM, Human Resources Branch, to the Departmental Executive Committee and periodically to bargaining agents at the national committee level.

3. Operational Committees on Violence in the Workplace are chaired by the Regional Director, Human Resources or, in the National Capital Area, by the Manager, Labour Relations. Operational Committees are responsible for the following:

1. ensuring response protocols, operational procedures and action plans are followed, incidents are reported and monitored;

2. reporting periodically to the Corporate Committee on the response process as well as on awareness and training activities;
3. monitoring the effectiveness of response activities related to incidents of actual and potential violence in the workplace;
4. consulting periodically with PWGSC bargaining agents at the regional/local level;
5. ensuring communication plans and training plans are developed and implemented;
6. ensuring tools are provided to the managers and response team members responsible for case management;
7. submitting statistics to the Joint Occupational Safety and Health (JOSH) Committee on an as-needed basis.

4. Managers are responsible for the following:

1. contacting either the Employee and Organization Assistance Programme (EOAP) counsellor, Labour Relations advisor or other response team member to discuss concerns brought forward by an employee;
2. gathering facts as stipulated in the Fact Finding exercise (see [Annex C](#));
3. making decisions and ensuring implementation of those decisions, based on recommendations of the response team.

5. Employees are responsible for the following:

1. reporting incidents of violence or incidents of potential violence to their manager or, in the event the manager is involved, to another manager in the chain of command;
2. conducting themselves in a non-threatening way.



6. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

- [Annex A - Working Protocol for An Integrated Response to an Incident of Violence](#);
- [Annex B - Working Protocol for An Integrated Response to an Incident of Potential Violence](#).

NOTE: The operational committees are responsible for adapting the above templates to meet regional needs such as names and telephone numbers.



7. COMPLIANCE

Compliance with this departmental policy is mandatory and in accordance with all existing legislation, other employer policies and initiatives. Infractions will be considered to be misconduct and appropriate remedies will be imposed. Employees may have disciplinary penalties imposed, up to and including discharge.




8. REFERENCES

Acts and Regulations:

- [Access to Information Act](#);
- [Canadian Human Rights Act](#);
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#);
- [Financial Administration Act](#);
- [Privacy Act](#);
- [Public Service Employment Act](#);
- [Public Service Staff Relations Act](#);
- [Canada Labour Code, Part II](#);
- [Canada Occupational Safety and Health Regulations \(COSH\), Part XVII, Safe Occupancy of the Workplace](#);
- [Criminal Code](#);
- [The Public Service for the Purposes of the Public Service Terms and Conditions of Employment Regulations](#).

PWGSC Publications:

- [DP 007 - Health and Safety Policy](#);
- [DP 009 - Critical Incident Reporting Policy](#);
- [DP 018 - Hazardous Occurrence Investigating, Reporting and Recording](#);
- [DP 022 - Employees Working Alone](#);
- [DP 051 - Departmental Security Program](#);
- [DP 052 - Corporate Security Program](#);
- [PWGSC Guidelines on Dispute Resolution and Harassment in the Workplace](#). 



9. INQUIRIES

Director
Human Relations and Compensation Services
Telephone: (819) 956-7378

Manager
Employee and Organization Assistance Programme
Telephone: (819) 956-1953

Director
Corporate Security
Telephone: (613) 736-2676

Director
Corporate Environment, Health and Safety
Telephone: (613) 736-2337

Original Signed by
R.A. Quail

R. A. Quail
Deputy Minister and
Deputy Receiver General for Canada



Annex A - Working Protocol for an Integrated Response to an Incident of Violence

Violence is defined as either verbal or physical behaviour that as a minimum threatens or intimidates someone (these are deemed acts of aggression). It is an expressed intention of inflicting injury or loss on a victim.

STEP 1

Call the local emergency number, the police or the on-duty guard if a situation is deemed life threatening or a threat to individual safety.

STEP 2

Call manager or another member of management team immediately.

STEP 3

Manager calls a response team member:

- Labour Relations Advisor
- EOAP Counsellor
- Security Officer
- Health and Safety Officer.

STEP 4
Manager gathers facts of the incident (see [Annex C](#) and [Appendix 1](#)).

STEP 5
Contacted response team member assembles response team for case management meeting.

NOTE: There may be cases in which, due to the nature of the situation, it may not be necessary to contact all members of the team.

STEP 6
Response team reviews, discusses, analyzes facts at case management meeting.

STEP 7
Response team identifies lead role, determines action plan, assigns responsibilities, implements, and follows-up.

STEP 8
Response team carries out operational debriefing, with a note to file including the facts, what worked well/what did not work well, and any recommendations.



Annex B - Working Protocol for an Integrated Response to an Incident of Potential Violence

This procedure is to be followed by the manager when there is a concern that a person could potentially become violent.

If you are concerned about any person being potentially violent, do not dismiss your feelings, discuss them with your manager, a Labour Relations advisor or an EOAP counsellor.

STEP 1
Manager calls Labour Relations advisor or EOAP counsellor to discuss concerns.

STEP 2
They establish the facts and determine seriousness (see [Annex C](#) and [Appendix 1](#)).

STEP 3
Manager decides whether or not the response team should be called.

NOTE: There may be cases in which, due to the nature of the situation, it may not be necessary to contact all members of the team.

STEP 4
Response team reviews, discusses, and analyzes the facts.

STEP 5

Response team determines action plan, assigns responsibilities then implements.

STEP 6

Response team carries out operational debriefing, with a note to file including the facts, what worked well/what did not work well, and any recommendations.



Annex C - Fact Finding

When an employee reports an incident to the manager, the manager must sit with the employee and record what (s)he witnessed or experienced. This section addresses what to record.

Who

Who was the victim and who was the perpetrator of the incident, and who else was present as a witness to the incident? This may become important later if there is a need to corroborate testimony where it's one person's word against another's.

What

Exactly what happened? The "what" of a report includes all of the facts and may also include the manager's assessment of the actual facts. It will help if the manager is aware of which things are facts and which are assessments or opinions about those facts.

When

When did the incident occur? If there were smaller events leading up to the main incident described, when did those events occur?

Where

Where did this incident happen?

Source: *Video - Workplace Violence: First Line of Defense*, The Kenwood Group 1994 Facilitator's guide, p. 43



Annex C - Appendix 1 - Assessment Guidelines

1. Recognizing Early Warning Signals

The list is in order of decreasing importance, from direct threat to indirect intimidation.

1. Direct or veiled verbal threats of harm.
2. Intimidation of others. This can be physical or verbal intimidation. Harassing phone calls and stalking are obvious examples
3. Carrying a concealed weapon or flashing a weapon to test reactions
4. Paranoid behaviour. Perceiving that the whole world is against them.
5. Moral righteousness and believing the organization is not following its rules and procedures.
6. Unable to take criticism of job performance. Holds a grudge, especially against a supervisor. Often verbalises hope for something to happen to the person against whom the employee has the grudge.
7. Expression of extreme desperation over recent family, financial or personal problems.
8. History of violent behaviour.
9. Extreme interest in semi-automatic or automatic weapons and their destructive power to people.

10. Fascination with incidents of workplace violence and approval of the use of violence under similar circumstances.
11. Disregard for the safety of co-employees.
12. Obsessive involvement with the job, often with uneven job performance and no apparent outside interests.
13. Being a loner who has a romantic obsession with a co-worker who does not share these feelings. (These feelings will often be so intense that the co-employee will feel threatened and may report the unwanted attention under a sexual harassment complaint.)

Source: *Video - Workplace Violence: First Line of Defense*, The Kenwood Group 1994 Facilitator's guide, p. 35

NOTE: Some warning signs are obvious and the need to report them is clear whereas the others are less obvious. All signs must be looked at in context when making an assessment.

2. Rule of Thumb

The following questions must be taken into consideration when evaluating the seriousness, that is, the individual's potential to be violent.

1. Is there a history of violence?
2. Is there a specific motive?
3. Is there a specific target?

If the answer is "yes" to the three questions, the individual is very likely to be violent.

If the answer is "yes" to two of the three questions, the individual may possibly be violent.

If the answer is "yes" to one of the three questions, the individual is then unlikely to be violent.

3. Anchors that May Inhibit Violence

In addition to these early warning signals, one should weigh any known factors that would inhibit a potential perpetrator from committing an act of violence. J.A. Kinney in his book *Violence at Work*, Prentice Hall, pages 91-92, identifies a list, taken from the *National Safe Workplace Institute*, which would help in determining the likelihood of the individual to commit violence:

1. Secure family life - spouse, children, other relatives.
2. Reasonably rational - somewhat future-oriented.
3. Stable finances - good credit rating; savings; reasonable debt load.
4. Drug & alcohol-free - no drug use or alcohol abuse.
5. Community ties - involved in community; may own home.
6. Outside interests - hobbies, sports (e.g., bowling).
7. Religious life - involved in church.
8. Friendships - externally driven, concerned about others.
9. Good work history - continuous employment.
10. Character - no real pattern of criminal conduct.
11. Emotionally stable - steady personality.

NOTE: In order to respect the rights of the individual, these anchors should not be actively sought out but used only if they are known at the time of the investigation or if the information is volunteered.

