



CONTROL MEASURES FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE RISK ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employers to conduct assessments for the risk of violence and to implement appropriate measures and procedures to control those risks. To accomplish this, assessments are required to conduct assessments to identify activities that may put employees at risk; who is at risk; what controls are in place; whether they are adequate; or whether additional controls are necessary.

Workplace violence is defined as:

- (a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to a worker,

[e.g. punching, kicking, hitting, pushing, physical assault, sexual assault]

- (b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker,

[ex. raising a fist, taking a swing, throwing an object]

- (c) a statement or behaviour that is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

[ex. written or verbal threat; stalking]

This is a companion document to assist with the completion of Departmental Violence Hazard Assessment Form .

CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS

To conduct assessments:

- 1) Print the *Departmental Violence Hazard Assessment Form*
- 2) Solicit input from employees in your area and review work activities that increase the risk of violence. Review the existing control measures and determine whether they are adequate. Refer to the following table *Suggested Violence Prevention Control Measure*. This table summarizes controls that may be appropriate for you to implement.
- 3) Identify other controls you feel may be needed to reduce the risk of violence. [Examples: cash handling procedures, buddy system, training, panic alarms, security cameras...].
- 4) Review and discuss the assessment with your employees to ensure they are aware of the risks and know how to protect themselves.
- 5) Electronically submit the completed *Departmental Violence Hazard Assessment Form* to the Occupational Health and Safety Department (barbara.evans@mohawkcollege.ca) for review and follow-up and keep a copy on file in your area for reference purposes.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

RISK ACTIVITIES

Violence can occur in any workplace and in any line of work. Some workplaces, including the education sector, are at higher risk of violence because of the nature of the activities and interactions with the public. Examples of other workplaces at high risk of violence include Health Care, Transportation, Financial, Retail, Hospitality and Social Services.

The generally recognized risk activities that may expose Mohawk College employees to workplace violence are:

Face to Face Contact

Refers to employees having face to face business/customer service dealings with students, clients or members of the public.

[e.g. sales, counselors, librarians, receptionists, faculty etc...]

Handling Cash or Valuables

Refers to employees:

- Storing/controlling petty cash
- Cashiers collecting money for merchandise, tuition or other business transactions
- Delivering or depositing cash to other area(s)

Working Alone

Refers to employees in situations whereby they are out of sight and hearing of others and when they do not expect a visit from another person.

Note: Working alone does not necessarily increase the risk of violence. It is important to assess each situation by considering circumstances such as the type of work, interaction with clients or public and the consequences of an emergency to determine whether the risk is low or high.

Meetings with Potentially Volatile Individuals

Refers to employees involved in meetings that may elicit a negative or confrontational response.

Examples: Counselling Services; Student Advising, Planning (e.g. Financial, Admissions, Registration), Human Resources, Security

Travelling or Hotel

Refers to employees travelling out of town to conduct site visits, attend meetings, conferences or seminars, daily or overnight.

Working in a Community-Based Setting

Refers to travelling in the community; providing services in private homes – caregivers, home support workers.

Working in a High Crime Area

Refers to working in areas where there is a high potential for assault, sexual assault, robbery, theft, or property damage.

CONTROL MEASURES

Control measures to prevent or minimize the risk for workplace violence can be generally categorized as Administrative, Design or Equipment. These are summarized below.

Administrative

Administrative measures include policies, procedures and work practices. These influence how work is performed to reduce or deter acts of violence and how to summon assistance in the event of an emergency.

The following College policies and procedures are related to workplace violence:

- [H402 “Harassment”](#)
- [ERP810 “Reporting and Responding to Workplace Violence”](#)
- [ERP809 “Emergency Lockdown”](#)
- [AC757 “Student Behaviour”](#)

Responding to Students in Distress Guide - A Guide for Faculty and Staff to Assist Students, prepared by the Office of Student Services and Success Initiatives can be downloaded from the following url: <http://www2.mohawkcollege.ca/announcements/DistressGuide.doc>

Other examples of administrative controls include:

- Keep cash to minimum
- Bank deposit or cash handling procedures
- Arrange for cash pick-ups/drops by Security or Contractor

- Control access to work area(s)
- ID badges
- Security patrols
- Identify a designated contact person
- Use buddy system
- Inform others of potentially confrontational situations
- Procedures [working alone, summoning assistance, preparing for potentially confrontational meeting, lockdown]
- Training [e.g. Robbery prevention, non-violent crisis intervention]

Design

Workplace design includes factors such as the physical lay-out of areas and furniture arrangement to reduce the risk of violence occurring by creating barriers or otherwise deterring acts of violence.

- Create visible spaces using windows (offices, doors, classes)
- Ensure areas are kept free of obstructions to improve visibility as below
- Manage traffic flow patterns
- Position reception and service areas such that they are visible to fellow employees or others passing by.
- Position furniture so that employee(s) are closer to the exit than potential problem to allow fast exit and prevent being cornered.
- Install physical barriers
- Minimize or restrict the number of entries into the building or area
- Ensure adequate lighting

Equipment

Equipment or devices that can be installed or used to deter acts of violence and to summon assistance in the event of an emergency.

- Electronic payment system to reduce amount of cash handled
- Drop or time-lock safe
- Door alarms or buzzers
- Security Cameras
- Panic alarms
- Signage
- Locks, keypad or electronic card access
- Telephones, walkie-talkie, cell phone

The following chart summarizes possible controls that may be used to reduce the risk of violence for identified activities:

Suggested Violence Prevention Control Measures¹

Control Measures	Type	Control #	Risk Activity						
			Face to Face Contact	Handling Cash or Valuables	Working Alone	Meetings with Potentially Volatile Individuals	Travel or Hotel	Working in Community Based Settings	Working in High Crime Areas
Make area visible to other workers and public. Keep sight lines unobstructed	Design	1	x	x	x	X			x
Have counters built wide enough or with barrier to limit access	Design	2	x	x		x			x
Install panic alarm (fixed or portable) to summon assistance	Equipment	3	x	x		x			x
Post emergency phone numbers in area and/or on phones # [e.g. 55; 88, 911) to summon assistance	Administrative	4	x	x		x			x
Control Access to area [e.g. keypad/card access; lock doors]	Equipment	5	x	x	x	x			x
Alarm or buzzer on doors	Equipment	6	x	x	x	x			x
Use reception area/desk	Administrative	7	x	x		x			x
Video surveillance	Equipment	8	x	x	x	x			x
Store sharp and dangerous items so that only workers have access to them	Administrative	9	x			x			x
Use a designated meeting room or area for visitors/clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows preferred for visibility to co-workers • Within hearing range • Arrange room for easy exit in case of emergency 	Design	10	x			x			

¹ Adapted from OHSCO Workplace Violence Toolbox

Control Measures	Type	Control #	Risk Activity						
			Face to Face Contact	Handling Cash or Valuables	Working Alone	Meetings with Potentially Volatile Individuals	Travel or Hotel	Working in Community Based Settings	Working in High Crime Areas
Maintain regular contact by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signing in and/or advising Security of your presence Advising another worker or designated person of your presence Arrange regular check-in by Security or another person Phone, cell phone, radio or text messaging 	Administrative	11	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Use "buddy" system	Administrative	12	x	x		x	x	x	x
Arrange to have Security nearby or patrol area	Administrative	13	x	x	x	x			x
Escort to parking lot [Security WalkSmart, co-worker]	Administrative	14	x		x	x			x
Inform/notify employees about the risk of violence related to specific situations or individuals, including possible triggers for violence.	Administrative	15	x	x	x	x		x	x
Inform employees when to go to a safe area or call for help	Administrative	16				x		x	x
Inform employees of recommended actions or responses if situation escalates	Administrative	17				x		x	x
Keep register or cash out of reach.	Administrative	18		x					
Establish internal code word(s) or other signal to indicate help is needed	Administrative	19	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Deposit cash in drop safe (locked or time-locked) Vary time of day registers are emptied of cash	Administrative	20		x					x

Control Measures	Type	Control #	Risk Activity						
			Face to Face Contact	Handling Cash or Valuables	Working Alone	Meetings with Potentially Volatile Individuals	Travel or Hotel	Working in Community Based Settings	Working in High Crime Areas
Establish maximum amount of cash that can be stored in till(s)	Administrative	21		x					x
Post sign notifying public that safes are used to limit cash on hand	Equipment	22		x					x
Use Security Services and/or Cash Handling Service Provider to deliver or transfer cash Vary times of cash transfers or deposits	Administrative	23		x					x
Opening and closing procedures	Administrative	24		x					x
Don't carry cash in bags or containers that make it obvious cash is being carried	Administrative	25		x					x
Instruction/procedures to follow when confronted by stranger or intruder	Administrative	26		x					
Robbery prevention training	Administrative	27		x					
Implement electronic payment system to reduce amount of cash on hand	Equipment	28		x					
Do not handle large amounts of cash in open view of others	Administrative	29		x			x		
Be selective about who is permitted in area	Administrative	30			x	x			x
Training to recognize and deal with aggressive or violent behavior	Administrative	31	x			x			x
Have the most experienced employee deal with the individual	Administrative	32	x			x			
Notify other staff in area that trouble is possible	Administrative	33	x			x			

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