

# **Preventing and Responding to Violence in the Workplace**

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## **Safety Tips and Guidelines**

Occupational Health and Safety

June 2010

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## INTRODUCTION

These safety tips and guidelines may be used as resource or training materials by posting or distributing and reviewing with employees at departmental meetings and may be modified to develop specific departmental procedures.

## GUIDELINES

### GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY

These guidelines have been developed to help faculty create and maintain a learning environment which is mutually respectful and conducive to learning. The following section is from the Teaching for Success sessions [2009].

#### Before Classes Start

- Know and follow the steps in the *College Response to Inappropriate Student Behaviour* as outlined in the *Student Behaviour Policy*.
- Know that you should expect to be fully supported by administration if you follow respectfully; the steps mentioned i.e. no sarcasm etc.
- Measures to maintain a safe, orderly and effective learning environment may include establishing rules of behaviour; designating seating arrangements; establishing safety rules; requiring a student to visit Counselling or Disability and or/ Health Services.

#### First Class

- Develop a handout or discuss during the first class, what constitutes appropriate behaviour and a respectful environment.
- Support your students in becoming aware of what policies affect them. i.e. Student Behaviour Policy; Human Rights etc.
- Recognize that when disrespectful, disruptive or sexist behaviour occurs you must deal with it ASAP. The absence of a response may be viewed as tacit approval of the behaviour or inability to deal with it.

#### Effective Verbal Communication

- a) Keep language descriptive, factual, functional
  - Avoid personalizing, e.g., instead of 'you are supposed to ...' Try, 'the first thing to do is ...'
  - Avoid blaming
  - Restate blaming statements by the student in descriptive, factual terms
  - Use "I" statements, such as I'm concerned that ... rather than "You shouldn't ..."
- b) Explain the rules, procedures, the reason for the decision

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- Use active listening to find out the student's understanding of the situation, that is, what is it the student doesn't understand?
  - Where possible and appropriate, use the student's wording to help explain
  - Get feedback to ensure that the message is understood, e.g., have student retell
- c) Respond to individual differences in communication skills
- Ask student how they process information best
  - Break information into chunks and summarize
  - Help student make an action plan – write it down
  - Use a variety of methods, e.g., flow chart, list, using brief, simple statements

### Effective Nonverbal Communication

- a) Nonverbal messages often communicate feelings
- Eye contact
  - Body position can be aggressive, discouraged, passive, open, etc.
  - Quality of voice, e.g., tone, cadence
  - Relationship of nonverbal to verbal communication, do they give the same message?
- b) 'Join' with the student by matching their nonverbal messages
- If they speak quietly, speak quietly
  - Use similar gestures, body position
- c) Use nonverbal strategies to improve the quality of communication
- If student speaking too loudly, speak quietly
  - If student speaking too quickly, speak more slowly
- d) Use verbal strategies to improve nonverbal communication
- If nonverbally aggressive, ask them to move/sit back, use a lower tone of voice
  - Verbally identify and/or respond to nonverbal message
- 1) You may choose to: frown, shake your head, move closer to the person; respond with. "I beg your pardon," or "I don't believe what I just heard." Say out loud that the behaviour isn't appropriate/okay/acceptable etc. If you are reluctant to reprimand in public, tell the student in front of class, that you would like to see him/her/them after class. One way or other, convey the message that the behaviour isn't acceptable and will be addressed.
- 2) Confront students who openly frown, shake their heads or mutter disrespectfully under their breath in response to something you or others have said. You may say something like, "You seem to be frowning. What's up?" or "I'm hearing some skepticism/dissent etc. Let's talk about what you're thinking."
- 3) When student talk among themselves while you are teaching, stop and look at them. If possible increase your proximity to them. Consider saying something such as, "I see you're talking. Do you have something to share with the class?" Remind the group that when someone is teaching, answering a question etc. listening is expected. Airtime will be given for dissenting views, questions etc. Remember that not all students are going to like you, accept your teaching or the questions and

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comments of their peers, but you have a right and a responsibility to maintain a respectful environment for yourself and for your students.

- 4) Remember that some students enjoy controversy as a way of relating to others intellectually. Their behaviour may have nothing to do with you or others personally. Student disagreement isn't the issue – how it's expressed is the concern.
- 5) Keep in mind that some aggressive, intimidating behaviour is emotionally based and may not respond to logic. You might respond to such behaviour with "I'm not here to convince you, but to get you to think," or "You really don't like what I'm saying and that's ok."
- 6) Deflect to the rest of the class. If a student says something like, "That's not true," or "I don't believe that at all." You may respond with, "Well what do the rest of you think?"
- 7) Be prepared to acknowledge, knowing that acknowledging doesn't mean agreeing. Saying something like, "I can see you feel strongly about that," or "Sounds like you're feeling pretty frustrated," can often assist someone to deescalate high emotion. The key is to be sincere and non-judgmental in your comments, otherwise they can sound trivializing or condescending.
- 8) Humour can be helpful in many situations, especially where logical reasoning hasn't or won't work. Responding lightly may include poking fun at yourself such as, "Well, now you know. I love my soapbox."
- 9) Don't feel that you have to handle every instance of disruptive or offensive behaviour verbally. It is all right to ignore some behaviour some of the time, (although ignoring it can be misinterpreted as an inability to deal with it.) The key often is that if you notice the behaviour and are affected by it, many students have noticed and are affected too. That's when dealing with it is necessary.

### Warning Signs of Potential Violence

No one can predict human behaviour, and there is no specific profile of a potentially violent person. Nevertheless, a potentially violent person may exhibit any or all of the following characteristics:

#### Physical Signs

Use caution if someone exhibits one or more of the following non-verbal signs or body language:

Exaggerated or violent gestures	Red-faced or white-faced
Change in voice	Sweating
Loud talking or chanting	Pacing
Shallow, rapid breathing	Restless or repetitive movements
Scowling sneering or use of abusive language	Trembling or shaking
Glaring or avoiding eye contact	Clenched jaws or fists
Violating your personal space	Facial grimacing

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### **History of Violence**

- Fascination with weapons, acts of violence, or both
- Demonstrates violence towards inanimate objects
- Evidence of prior violent behaviour

### **Threatening Behaviour**

- States intention to hurt someone (verbal or written)
- Hold grudges
- Excessive behaviour (phone calls, gift-giving)
- Escalating threats that appear well planned
- A preoccupation with violence

### **Intimidating Behaviour**

- Argumentative
- Displays unwarranted anger
- Easily frustrated
- Uncooperative
- Impulsive
- Challenges co-worker and management

### **Increase in Personal Stress**

- An unreciprocated, romantic obsession
- Serious family or financial problems
- Recently job loss

### **Negative Personality Characteristics**

- Suspicious of others
- Believes he or she is entitled to something
- Cannot take criticism
- Feels victimized
- Shows a lack of concern for the safety and well being of others
- Has low self esteem
- Blames others or his or her problems or mistakes

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### Marked Changes in Mood Or Behaviour

- Extreme or bizarre behaviour
- Irrational beliefs and ideas
- Appears depressed
- Expresses hopelessness or heightened anxiety
- Demonstrates a drastic change in belief systems
- Marked decline in work performance

### Socially Isolated

- History of negative interpersonal relationships
- Few friends or family
- Sees the workplace as a “family”
- Has an obsessive involvement with his or her job

### Abuses Drugs or Alcohol

## OFFICE AND PERSONAL SAFETY

- Ask for identification or authorization from “service people” who want entry into your department. If in doubt, check with Security.
- Never loan equipment or keys to strangers. Never leave keys in an unlocked drawer or file cabinet. College keys may only be duplicated by the College locksmith. Report the loss of keys immediately to the Security Department.
- Never prop open a door for someone who will be joining you later; you may be inviting any number of unknown “some ones” into your area without your knowledge.
- When leaving your office for the day, make sure:
  - All doors and windows are closed and locked.
  - All valuables and sensitive materials (grades, letters, evaluations, etc.) are removed from desk tops and locked up.
  - All desks and files are locked.
- Record the serial numbers, brand names and descriptions of personal property or valuables which are kept in your office or work area. Keep a duplicate copy of this information at home.
- Never leave valuables such as a wallet, purse, jewellery or keys, lying out on your desk. Place articles in a drawer or somewhere out of sight. If you leave the room, lock the drawer. It takes

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only about eight seconds for someone to walk into a room and take something, such as your purse, wallet or calculator.

- Treat your Photo ID Card as you would a college key. In many cases it is just that – a key to sensitive areas.
- Be alert to strangers wandering aimlessly around your office or work area. A common ploy for such individuals bent upon criminal intents is to say that they are looking for work or a job. Also, they often name a fictitious teacher they are looking for. If you cause to doubt their sincerity, call the Security Department.
- Keep “coffee funds” and petty cash under lock and key. If there is a safe available, store the money there.

### **Panic Buttons**

Panic buttons are devices used to immediately and discretely contact Security in the event of an emergency. Security Services will assess areas and install or provide panic alarms (buttons) where necessary.

#### **Panic buttons may be:**

##### **Fixed**

Device is secured to a surface (e.g. Underneath desk or table).

##### **Portable**

Device may be carried on the person (e.g. on a chain or lanyard). Suitable for

### **Panic Alarm Activation**

Panic alarms come in one button and two button styles to activate the alarm:

One Button Style: Press the button

Two Button Style: Press both buttons simultaneously

### **When to Use the Alarm**

Activate the alarm to notify Security by pressing the button(s) if you feel threatened or see another person in need of assistance.

#### **Notes:**

- (i) Portable alarms are programmed to work in designated areas only. Be sure to know the boundaries for your activation area. For example: A portable alarm programmed for an office employee will not connect with Security if the alarm is activated from another location [e.g. parking lot etc...].
- (ii) Security Services checks the alarms regularly to ensure they are powered and operating properly. Contact Security if you have a portable alarm to make arrangements for the device to be checked.

## Emergency Preparedness

Your best defense is to be prepared for emergencies before they happen by:

- Imagining appropriate responses to various situations you may find yourself in
- Deciding ahead of time how you will respond to various situations
- Knowing the location of emergency exits and procedures.
- Knowing where to access panic alarms, telephones, emergency intercoms.
- Installing panic buttons in your work area
- Comparing procedures with your coworkers or people with similar occupations
- Not loaning keys or access cards to anyone. Report lost or stolen cards or keys immediately to Security
- Tell your supervisor, Security or Human Resources if you are a victim of domestic violence or are aware of a person with a history of violent behaviour and you feel there is a potential for the violence to extend into the workplace.

## Trusting Your Instincts

Certain comments and/or conduct may not be welcomed. For example, this could include someone taking pictures of you without your consent. Consider:

- Keeping personal information at a minimum when talking with anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable
- Do not engage in conversations that make you feel uncomfortable. Excuse yourself and walk away
- Being firm and confident and do not permit any kind of harassment.
- Being alert for anger and hostility. De-escalate arguments whenever this is possible
- If you feel you are being harassed, threatened or intimidated: tell the person to stop, document the incident and inform your supervisor, Security or Human Resources.

## Dealing with Strangers

- Adopt a non-threatening attitude toward visitors in your office or building by asking "May I help you?" as this is really asking "What are you doing here?"
- Escort strangers to the location or person they identify as their destination if you are comfortable doing so
- Report strangers acting suspiciously to Security

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- Build a rapport with customers so that you can distinguish strangers from repeat customers
- Do not open doors to strangers before or after regular business hours

### **Elevator Safety**

- Do not get onto an elevator with anyone who makes you feel uneasy. Wait for the next elevator
- Get off the elevator if a stranger acting suspiciously gets on with you
- Stand near the control panel when entering an elevator
- If something or someone makes you uncomfortable, push the button for the next floor or push the alarm
- On Campus, picking up the elevator telephone receiver will connect you to Security Services

### Preventing robberies

1. Make the store attractive to customers and unattractive to robbers.
  - Keep the store clean, tidy, and well-lit.
  - Keep active and alert. Don't be a target.
  - Get away from the sales counter when there are no customers.
2. Ensure the sales counter is clearly visible from outside the store. A cash register location that is difficult to see clearly from the street helps a robbery to happen unnoticed.
3. Keep alert at all times.
  - Identify your escape routes.
  - Know the location of phones or assistance outside the premises.
  - Be aware of areas with poor lighting.
  - Avoid looking directly at suspicious loiterers. Prolonged eye-to-eye contact, especially if there is a group involved, may be seen as a challenge and possibly escalate the situation. Fill out a description sheet. If the loiterers don't leave, call the police and ask for a patrol check.
4. Greet everyone who enters the store.
  - Be friendly and briefly look directly into their eyes.
  - Ask the customer ahead of someone suspicious, "Are you together?" The customer will usually turn around to look at the person. This may deter a robber.
5. Keep the cash register fund to a minimum.
  - Remove all \$50 and \$100 bills from the cash register as soon as you receive them.
  - Post signs advising "Minimum cash kept on premises."
  - Ask customers for exact change or the smallest bills possible.
6. Take extra precautions after dark and during slow periods.
  - Check each night to see that outside lights are on and working.
  - Operate only one register late at night through early morning.
  - Open the empty unused register drawer and tip it up for display.
  - Run an "empty register" — just \$5 bills and change.

### If a robbery occurs

- Remain cool and calm. Handle the entire procedure as if you are making a sale to a customer. Most robberies last under two minutes. The longer a robbery takes, the more nervous the robber becomes, so keep it short and smooth.
- Listen carefully to what the robbers say, and obey them. Don't be a hero.
  - Don't fight. Don't use weapons. Don't jeopardize your own safety or that of other workers.
  - Give the robbers all the cash and merchandise they want.
  - Don't delay or argue.
- Tell the robbers of any possible surprises.
  - Tell the robbers if you must reach for something or move in any way. Ask them for their directions.
  - Tell the robbers if another employee is in the back room so they will not be startled.

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- Activate the alarm system only after the robbers have left, not while they are still in the store.
- Continue to remain cool and calm.
  - Be careful not to stare or fix your gaze too long on the robbers, but observe what they look like, what they are wearing, their size, and the type and colour of weapons. Listen carefully to what they say.
  - Note the robbers' exact heights against the height strip as they exit.
  - Immediately after the robbers have left, record their appearance, mannerisms, and any distinguishing characteristics on a description sheet.
- Do not chase robbers.
- Call the police.
  - Keep police numbers near the phone — 911 or your local emergency number.
  - Tell the police:
    - The direction robbers took when they left
    - The time of the robbery
    - The appearance of the robbers, and any weapon or vehicle used
  - Stay on the phone until the police tell you they have all the information they need.
  - Protect the crime scene. Ask any witnesses to wait for the police. Get names and addresses. Don't touch the evidence.

### Handling Money or Valuables

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Observe your surroundings before making your transaction
- Keep cash register funds to a minimum
- Remove all large bills (\$50, \$100) from the register frequently.
- Use electronic payment systems if possible.
- Vary the time of day that you empty or reduce funds in the cash register.
- Contact Security Services to discuss arrangements for transporting money
- Arrange regular cash pick-up with a licensed security firm
- Install and use a locked safe with a drop slot.
- Change the combination of the safe at frequent intervals.
- Post visible signs which indicate that minimum cash (state amount, e.g. less than \$50) is kept on the premises.
- DO NOT handle large amounts of cash or count money in public view.
- Use cash drawer covers.

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- Avoid making night deposits.
- Vary the times of deposits.
- Do not make deposits alone.

### **Working Alone and “Buddy” System**

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.

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- Carry a communication device (e.g., cell phone, radio or panic alarm as appropriate)
- Know your environment (e.g., location of exits, phones, emergency intercoms or panic alarms if available)
- Use the “buddy” system whenever possible

**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.

### **“Buddy” System**

The buddy system is a procedure in which two people (buddies) work closely to monitor each other’s activities and safety in certain situations. This is to be used in situations where an individual is likely to be or become upset or irate, aggressive or commit an act of violence. Examples: Counselling, Health Services, Financial Aid, Admissions and Security and those holding meetings with potentially volatile individuals.

If you feel threatened, trust your instincts and summon immediate assistance by calling the local police at 911 or contacting Security through any of the following methods as applicable to your particular campus:

- Ext. 55 on college phones other than at the IAHS or Brantford Laurier and Nipissing
- Ext. 88 at the IAHS
- Ext. 5888 at Brantford Laurier and Nipissing
- through the use of any of the following as applicable to the specific location:
  - panic alarms
  - emergency intercoms in hallways or parking lots
  - emergency buttons on Bell payphones or
- through another individual

### **Working Alone**

Maintain regular contact with a designated person if you must work alone. Depending on the particular circumstances, this can be done by:

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- Signing in; using card access 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, text messaging

Workers who work alone after hours on occasion (6pm-7am weekdays and anytime on weekends or holidays) should:

- Relocate or park your vehicle in a well lit area as close to the building as possible.
- Advise Security and any other workers of your presence
- Request an escort to your vehicle if necessary

#### **Check-in Procedure**

Have someone contact you periodically to ensure you're okay. The checking procedure must require you to take some predetermined action to confirm you are all right and do not need help.

- Contact may be in person, by telephone, or any other effective means
- Telephone contact at predetermined intervals
- Visual contact or a signal to workers in adjacent premises, or to security patrols

#### **Personal Check by Another Person**

In many working alone instances, checking the worker's well-being may be achieved by periodic visits at regular intervals by an individual, such as the employer, another worker of the employer or someone designated by the employer (such as Security Services).

Worker can make the call or be contacted by another worker. The length of time between the checks will depend on the estimated hazard of the job function or location of the workspace.

#### **Periodic Telephone Contact**

Use of the telephone for communication at regular intervals may be adequate in low-risk working alone situations. Telephone numbers for routine calling and emergency situations must be posted prominently.

The intervals between these contacts must be determined by the degree of risk at the workplace. maintaining telephone calls to specific times would reduce the number of false-alarm situations arising from the person working alone or contact person not being available due to non-emergency situations.

#### **Working off Site**

The following procedures are outlined to help minimize or prevent risks associated with working off-site:

- Do not enter any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe
- Have access to a phone or cell phone at all times
- Keep a designated contact person informed of your location.

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- Use an established check in procedure which allows you to manage typical situations you may encounter off site
- Call ahead to confirm appointments.
- Always wear your identification badge. This will signal that you are working in some official capacity
- Wear comfortable, professional clothing and practical shoes which will enable you to leave quickly if necessary
- Only carry what is absolutely necessary to conduct your business. Heavy purses and large briefcases may be cumbersome and slow your exit
- Document your visit. Do not leave out any incidents that make you feel apprehensive
- Keep client record and indicate if the client or patient is known to be aggressive, hostile or potentially violent
- Provide information on high risk geographical areas to fellow workers
- Do not carry any weapon, including pepper spray. Weapons can just as easily be used against you and are illegal in some jurisdictions

#### **Check-in Procedure**

Have someone contact you periodically at scheduled times to ensure you're okay while you are away. The checking procedure must require you to take some predetermined action to confirm you are all right and do not need help.

- Contact may be in person, by telephone, or any other effective means
- Contact at predetermined intervals

#### **Preparing for a Potentially Violent Meeting**

Take the following steps if you must meet with an individual and you have reason to believe it has potential to escalate into an act of violence:

- Do not enter any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe
- Conduct a background check, including reports from fellow employees; keep in mind individual confidentiality
- Consider having two employees meet with the individual
- Arrange to have Security nearby, but not visible
- Notify other staff that trouble is possible
- Set up a communication system to use and check on the interaction.
  - For example, use a yes/no technique with a co-worker who calls and asks the following questions at a pre arranged time: Are you alright? Do you want me to come to your office? Do you want me to call Security/police?

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- Be prepared and on time for the meeting
  - Use a special room. e.g., rooms with windows in the door, rooms close to other workers, rooms with easy exit in case of emergency
  - Set up meeting so that you are closest to the exit
  - Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
  - Remove unnecessary papers, objects or equipment from the desk that could be used as a weapon

## WORK RELATED TRAVEL

### Travel Safety

- Travel light and wear comfortable footwear that allow you to move quickly
- Read or work while you travel but remain aware of your surroundings. You look less vulnerable when you are busy
- Use crowds as a camouflage. Stand among a group of people waiting for a bus, cab, or subway
- Make arrangements to arrive before dark when possible
- Plan ahead: know your route, how you are going to get where you need to go
- Keep some money in an outside pocket to avoid fumbling through your purse or wallet
- Make sure your contacts at home and office know your schedule, and telephone number. Contact them when you have arrived
- Have your travel agent select hotels that take extra measures to ensure your safety, recommend a safe taxi company, tell you about customs and culture if you are traveling to a foreign country: simple gestures can be considered rude or aggressive
- Do NOT draw attention to yourself by displaying large amounts of cash or expensive jewellery
- Do NOT allow your travel plans to be given out to strangers

## Walking Safety

- Ensure that employees are aware of emergency telephone locations and their use on campus.
- Take advantage of the Smart Walk Campus Program. Volunteers or Security Officers will walk you from place to place on campus at your request.
- Plan your route. Know exactly where you are going.
- Familiarize yourself with the area
- Wear comfortable, flat shoes, such as running shoes
- Scan your route. Be observant and aware of your surroundings
- Walk with confidence
- Keep your head up, look around and directly at people to assess them, but do not stare
- Stay on well lit streets, in the centre of the sidewalk, away from hiding spots such as bushes, doorways, alleys and parked cars. Cross the road if necessary
- If you know you are being followed:
  - Attempt to get back on the bus, walk directly and quickly, without running or looking back, to a safe place such as a service station or store, call 911
- Walk around groups of people rather than through them
- Use main entrances as much as possible, avoid rear or secluded entrances
- If you use a stairwell, be sure it is well lit and that you can quickly exit to safe place
- If a threatening vehicle approaches you, turn and walk in the opposite direction. This will make it difficult for the driver to pursue you in reverse or turning the car around. Do not feel pressured to talk with strangers – trust your instincts.
- Trust your instincts when you feel something is not right
- Secure packages by carrying them under your arm or with straps across your body
- Carry a personal safety alarm
- Report any suspicious incidents to the police or your place of business

## Driving Safety

- Keep your vehicle in good repair: ex. gas tank at least ½ full, tire pressure
- Plan your route and avoid known dangerous areas
- Carry a cell phone and keep it handy.

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- Carry a personal safety alarm on your key chain. Use to attract attention if necessary
- Always lock your car, even while you are in it
- Never leave your vehicle while it is running or with your keys in the ignition.
- Never leave your car unlocked, even for a few minutes.
- Do not leave valuables or articles within the car exposed to view, even if the car is locked. Place valuables in your trunk.
- Make sure someone knows your plans, your route and your estimated arrival time
- Go to a service station or store to ask for directions if you get lost. Do not stop on the side of the road
- Look in your car before you get in to make sure you do not have uninvited passengers.
- Ask for an escort to your vehicle if you feel uncomfortable walking there alone.
- Use an anti-theft device such as a kill switch, car alarm or steering wheel locking device.
- Do not hide a spare key on your vehicle, it can be found.
- Be alert while driving. Particularly at stop signs, traffic lights and when entering or leaving your vehicle.
- If confronted by someone with a weapon, give them your vehicle. It's not worth your life.
- Do not pick up hitch-hikers. This practice is very dangerous.
- If you feel you are being followed, do not go directly home. Drive to the nearest public building (police station, fire station, hospital).
- Ensure your vehicle is well maintained. If your vehicle breaks down, pull over.
  - Turn on your 4-way flashers
  - Lock all doors and roll up windows
  - Display a "Call Police" sign and wait inside your vehicle for the police.
  - If someone stops to help you, roll down your window just enough to ask them to call for help.
- Do not carry weapons, since they can be used against you.
- If forced to give up your belongings or purse, throw them to the ground away from you and run in the opposite direction. Yell for help. Resisting a purse snatcher may result in physical injury.
- Remember the vehicle license number, car description, description of suspicious persons, and report this information to the police.

### **Parking Lot Safety**

- Ensure that employees are aware of emergency telephone locations and their use on campus.
- Take advantage of the Smart Walk Campus Program. Volunteers or Security Officers will walk you from place to place on campus at your request.
- Park near the building in a highly visible and well lit area
- Use main entrances as much as possible, avoid rear or secluded entrances
- Keep valuables, including purses, out of sight in your car
- Be prepared when you leave the building or your vehicle. Have access to keys to lock or unlock doors, the key to open your vehicle, a whistle or other personal alarm
- Position the correct key to open the door lock as you approach your vehicle
- If someone is loitering near your vehicle, avoid them and walk to a safe place. Call Security
- As you approach you vehicle, look to see if some is hiding underneath it:
  - Check in, and around, your vehicle before getting in
  - Ensure that all doors are lock and all windows are up once inside your vehicle
- After dark do not walk to your vehicle alone
- If you must walk to your vehicle alone have a co-worker watch you from a window.
- Scan the area for suspicious individuals before you leave your vehicle or building. Have a back up plan if there is danger
- When waking to or from your vehicle keep your head erect, be alert and scan your route. Proceed directly and quickly

### **Public transit**

- Avoid isolated or poorly lit bus stops.
- Plan your arrival time at the bus stop to get you there just before your bus arrives.
- If you are alone or it's late at night, sit near the driver. If someone bothers you, tell the driver immediately.

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- Try to sit where you can see your upcoming bus stop as you arrive. If you see suspicious or menacing individuals at your stop, get off at the next stop.
- When stepping off the bus, check to see if you are being followed. If you are, walk directly and quickly — without running or looking back — to a service station or store. Call 911.
- If possible, plan to have someone meet you at your home bus stop.

## Travelling to and from work

### Pre-arrival planning

1. Before you leave for work:
  - Visualize where you will park when you arrive at work
  - Ensure that you have enough gas to get to and from work
  - Ensure that you have everything you need for work on the front seat beside you, if you are travelling alone
2. Visualize a backup plan you can use if your arrival at work does not go as planned.

### Arrival at your parking spot

1. Park in well-lit areas. Avoid alleys, wooded areas, and tunnels. Use caution in underground lots — stay in open, lit areas near exits. As you enter the parking lot, keep the vehicle locked and the windows rolled up.
2. As you enter the designated parking area and before you leave your vehicle, scan the area for suspicious persons. Have a backup plan ready.
3. Prepare yourself to get out of the vehicle with everything you need before unlocking the vehicle door. Ensure you have the key to the building, a whistle or other personal alarm, and other personal belongings. Avoid having to reach back into the vehicle for items after you have exited.
4. Ensure the vehicle is locked and the windows are up while it is unattended.

### Returning to your vehicle

- Prepare yourself to leave the store or office with everything you need, such as keys to lock doors, the key to open your vehicle, and a whistle or other personal alarm.
- Use the main entrance as much as possible — avoid rear or secluded exits.
- Scan the area for suspicious or menacing individuals. Have a backup plan if there is danger.

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- Proceed directly and quickly to your vehicle. Walk with your head erect, look alert, and scan your route.
- If possible, avoid walking to your vehicle alone. Go with other workers, security guards, or another escort. Provide the escort with a ride back to the main entrance.
- If you must walk to your vehicle alone, have a co-worker watch you from a window, if possible, and wave to him or her on the way to your vehicle. If no one is available, fake it: Pretend you are being watched and wave to an imaginary co-worker on the way to your vehicle. Once you are in your vehicle, ensure all doors are locked and windows are up.

### Hotel Safety

- If you are staying overnight in a hotel alone, ask the hotel if they can book you into a room on the second floor or higher, preferably near an elevator. Let the hotel front desk know you are travelling alone for extra assistance if needed.

## **RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

### **Dealing with a Potentially Violent Person**

#### **Tips for Verbal Communication**

Focus your attention on the person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.

- Remain calm.
- Speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Speak simply. DO NOT rely on official language or complex terminology.
- Listen carefully. DO NOT interrupt or offer unsolicited advice or criticism.
- Encourage the person to talk. DO NOT tell the person to relax or calm down.
- Try to understand. Ask questions like “Help me understand why you are upset.”
- Once you think you understand, repeat it back to the person so they know you understand.
- Remain open-minded and objective.
- Use delaying tactics to give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water.
- Acknowledge the person’s feelings. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.

#### **DO NOT**

- Confront, Antagonize, Challenge Threaten or Belittle

#### **Tips for Non-Verbal Behaviour and Communication**

- Use calm body language – relaxed posture with hands unclenched, attentive expression.
- Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked.
- Position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Give the person enough physical space....this varies by culture, but normally 2-4 feet is considered an adequate distance.
- Get on the other person’s physical level. If they are seated try kneeling or bending over, rather than standing over them.

#### **DO NOT**

- Pose a challenging stance, such as standing directly opposite, putting your hands on your hips, pointing your finger, crossing your arms
- Glare or stare

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- Make sudden movements
- Fight. Walk or run away. Contact Security or the police.

#### Tips for Problem Solving

- Try to put yourself in the person's shoes, so that you can better understand how to solve the problem.
- Ask for his or her recommendations.
- Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like "You are probably right" or "It was my fault." If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
- Be honest. DO NOT make false statements or promises you cannot keep.
- Remain professional and take the person seriously. Be respectful.
- Break an issue down into smaller units and offer step-by-step solutions so that the person is not overwhelmed by the situation or issue.
- Be reassuring and point out choices.
- Try to keep the person's attention on the issue at hand.
- **DO NOT**
  - Take sides or agree with distortions
  - Reject the person's demands or position from the start.
  - Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual. If necessary, terminate the interaction.
- Try to avoid escalating the situation
- Find ways to help the person save face.
- In a calm and non-threatening manner, clearly state that violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Avoid issuing commands and making conditional statements.
- If the nature of the situation involves punishment or sanctions: delay the punitive action until you have backup or the situation is safe.
- If you feel threatened try to politely and calmly terminate the interaction in a non-threatening manner, if possible.
- If you feel threatened:
  - Know what backup is available to assist you in handling a difficult individual.
  - Use a silent alarm.

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- Use a code word.
- If you threaten to call the police, call them.

### **Face to Face Contact/ Dealing with Irate Customers**

Involves direct contact with members of the public and includes students, clients and employees. It is very likely you will have an encounter with an upset or irate person.

- Know how to summon immediate assistance when an emergency occurs or is likely to occur
- If you feel you are being harassed, threatened or intimidated:
  - Tell the person to stop
  - Document the incident (e.g., the nature of the incident, time, place, witnesses)
  - Inform your supervisor or manager.
- Focus on the emotions first. Remain calm, and try to calm the other person.
- Avoid escalating the situation. Find ways to help the irate customer save face.
- Listen carefully and try to put yourself in the customer's shoes, so you can better understand how to solve the problem.
- If you cannot calm the person, ask for help.

### **Threats and Stalking**

- Take all threats seriously
- Notify security and the police
- Ensure that employees are aware of emergency telephone locations and their use on campus.
- Obtain an escort to and from your vehicle. Take advantage of the Walk Smart program or Security Officers to walk you from place to place on campus at your request.
- If the threat has been received by a co-worker, immediately inform the threatened employee about the threat
- Remind all employees not to give out personal information about other staff
- Ensure the employee informs his or her children's school and neighbours of any threats involving the children

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- Make sure all staff in the office are aware of the threat so team supports can be put in place. Provide a description of the person who issued the threat
- Support the employee if he or she is laying charges
- Provide debriefing and/or counselling employee in necessary
- Record all pertinent information such as date and time of incident, witnesses, anything that will help identify the stalker
- Keep a log detailing every incident of unwanted contact (phone calls, letters, visits, etc.)
- Security and Human Resources will work with you to develop a personal safety plan that may include:
  - Alternate work arrangement
  - Escort to/from parking lot to your office
  - Loaner cell phone
  - Personal alarm
  - Support through the Employee Assistance Plan
  - Coordination with police or other external resources as necessary

### Responding to an Attack

If attacked:

- YELL AND SCREAM CONTINUOUSLY (NO-NO, HELP ME, FIRE, LEAVE ME ALONE, etc.) This will create attention and may discourage the attacker.
- Run to the nearest well lit area.
- If someone grabs your purse, deposit bag, or other personal property, do not resist and do not chase the robber.
- Do not allow an attacker to take you to another location. If you are being pulled or dragged against your will, drop to the ground and roll – this will make it harder for the attacker to control you and you may be able to break away.
- Call the police immediately after any incident and record the appearance and mannerisms of the offender.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

### Lockdown and Hold and Secure Procedures

Refer to [ERP809 "Emergency Lockdown"](#)

#### INTRODUCTION

"Lockdown" and "hold and secure" are emergency measures used to protect people inside a building from a dangerous situation taking place either inside or outside the building.

**Lockdown:** A situation where there is a direct threat to the safety and well-being of the College community such as a shooter, a hostage situation or a terrorist attack. The goal is to remove yourself from the area of immediate threat, go to a secure area and remain out of site. Lockdown announcements will be initiated by Security.

**Hold and Secure:** A type of lockdown that could arise from police action, environmental hazard or weather related activity outside the College that poses no direct threat to people inside the building. In this case, the College would conduct business as usual, but all entrances to the college would be locked to deny access to the building from outside. Hold and Secure announcements will be initiated by Security or any building management personnel.

These procedures will be ordered upon identification or notification of a threatening situation and will be communicated by a pre-recorded message played over the building speaker system.

#### Notes:

- 1) If any threat is viewed or perceived, call College Security at extension 55 (extension 88 at IAHS) or call 911.
- 2) The specific procedures for staff and students at IAHS do not apply to the Institute for Applied Health Sciences where security procedures are determined by McMaster University.
- 3) Drills will be always be preceded by an announcement 5 minutes in advance. If no announcement precedes a drill – it is real.

### Procedures

#### Lockdown

Upon hearing the announcement of a lockdown;

- If you are able to do so safely – exit the building immediately. If safe exit is not possible: REMAIN CALM and encourage others to remain calm, immediate cease all activity.
- If you are in a classroom or office, remain there.
- If you are in a hallway, move to a room or other place of safety immediately.

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- Provide assistance, where required, to individuals with a disability or language barrier.
- Secure doors if possible, turn out lights, cover windows or pull shades if possible.
- Remain quiet and out of sight. Stay away from all windows and doors.
- Silence cell phones or devices that can generate noise.
- Staff members or volunteers should record names of persons present.
- Stay quiet and await instructions. Lockdowns can last a considerable time,
- Do not open the door under any circumstances.
- Do not evacuate if a fire alarm sounds unless identifiable emergency officials knock on your door and advise evacuation or unless you are certain there is a need to evacuate.

#### **For open areas such as Cafeteria, Library or Gymnasium**

- Generally follow the same steps as those listed above.
- If there are no doors that can be locked or barricaded, take shelter under desks, tables, chairs or behind bookcases or other furniture or equipment.

#### **End of Lockdown**

A recorded announcement of an “all clear” signal will be given to indicate the emergency has ended. Security will conduct a room by room confirmation.

#### **Hold and Secure**

Upon hearing the announcement for hold and secure:

- Remain in the building until further notice.

#### **End of Hold and Secure**

An “all clear” announcement will be given by Security advising the emergency situation outside the college has ended.

## Bomb Threat Procedures

Refer to procedure [ERP808 "Bomb Threats"](#)

### Written Threat

It is vital that a document containing a bomb threat be handled by as few people as necessary in order to preserve evidence for the police investigation.

- After the document has been opened and read, and a determination is made to call Security or the Police, handle the document by the edges only and insert into a clear plastic sleeve. Do not show the document around the office to avoid generating panic.
- If the information is received by email, keep the message saved on your computer; do not send it to anybody else until directed to do so by the Manager of Security or Police.

### Telephone Threat

In the event that a threat is received by phone, it is important to compile as much information as possible about the caller, using the following protocol:

- Remain calm; do not panic.
- Refer to the bomb threat check list included as **Attachment A** to this Procedure.
- Look at the phone display (if there is one) and record this information.
- Try to keep the caller talking to get as much information as possible
- Do not interrupt the caller.
- Pay attention to the background noises to pick up distinctive noises such as traffic, television, music, voices.
- Note characteristics of the caller's voice, gender, age, accent etc.
- Notify Security quickly and quietly, without tipping off the caller that you are seeking assistance.
- Try to get information about the bomb, its location and the time of detonation.
- Immediately after the call, notify Security if you haven't already done so.
- Notify your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Do not sound the Fire Alarm.
- Provide Security with the completed bomb threat checklist.
- If the threat is on your voice mail, do not erase it. Notify the Manager of Security or the Police immediately.



## ATTACHMENT A

### Bomb Threat Checklist

*Place this list under your telephone for easy reference.*

**1. Exact wording of the threat:**

**Remain calm and keep the caller on the line as long as possible. Ask to have the message repeated.**

2. When is the bomb going to explode?

Where is the bomb right now?

What kind of bomb is it?

What will cause it to explode?

Did you place the bomb?

Why?

What is your address?

What is your name?

**3. Report the threat immediately to Security, your Manager and 911**

4. Be prepared to describe the threat in as much detail as possible to the Police. Record information here:

a): Gender of Threat maker:

Approximate Age:

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**Voice characteristics: (Circle all those that apply)**

Calm	Loud	Distinct	Nasal	Angry	Laughing
Slurred	Stuttering	Excited	Crying	Lisping	Cracking
Slow	Normal	Raspy	Disguised	Rapid	Deep
Clearing Throat		Accent	Soft	Ragged	Deep Breathing

Familiar (Who?)

**b) Background Noises: (circle all that apply)**

Street Noises	Music	Restaurant	Household Noises
Long Distance	Motor	Factory Machinery	Animal Noises Clear
PA System	Static	Office Machinery	Voices

Other:

**c) Demeanour: (circle all that apply)**

Well spoken	Incoherent	Irrational	Foul
Taped	Message read		

Remarks:

Phone number where threat was received:

Date and Time of Threat:

Your Name, Campus and Room No:

## Preventing and Responding to Workplace Violence Safety Tips and Guidelines

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### **References:**

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide. 3rd Edition 2009.

Classroom Management Strategies - Teaching for Success event delivered in August, 2009.