Violence is encountered across many New Zealand workplaces. It can occur randomly without aggravation. It may cause mental and physical pain and suffering.

Workplace violence applies to any incident in which employees and others are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of, their work. This can also involve external sources, such as members of the public or clients.

**Workplace violence has an affect on everyone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Business/Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower work production</td>
<td>Low staff morale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower self esteem</td>
<td>Poor image for the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental and physical pain</td>
<td>Difficult to recruit new staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities and in extreme cases, death</td>
<td>Financial losses, absenteeism, lost productivity and high medical expenses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This toolbox talk is intended to help start a health and safety conversation and raise awareness about workplace violence. It is not designed as a complete risk management tool for the activity.

Quick fact

All businesses or organisations have a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to eliminate risks to health and safety, as far as is reasonably practicable – this includes violence.
The recommended approach to managing violence is to eliminate the opportunity for violent behaviour to occur. Follow these I AM safe steps to minimise the threat of violence in your workplace.

Step 1: IDENTIFY where violence could happen
- Provide staff with information on how to deal with potentially violent situations.
- Informally ask staff if they feel violence is present on their site.
- Ensure all sectors of the business are consulted, teams may have differing views.
- Ensure staff feel supported and know what to do in a potentially violent situation.

Step 2: AVOID abuse
- Develop plans for responding to and reporting any potential or actual incidents of violence.
- Keep detailed record of all incidents.
- Categorise incidents by time, place, who and type of violence.
- Grouping incidents based on similar features will help to identify violence triggers.
- Make sure managers are available to all those on site who may want to raise any potential workplace violence issues.

Quick fact
Verbal abuse and threats are the most common type of violence at work. Physical attacks are relatively rare in New Zealand workplaces.

Step 3: MANAGE worker wellbeing
Having the right facilities on site is a legal requirement and can improve morale, check: do you have easily accessible facilities on site - such as sheltered spots, toilets, handwashing and drinking water?

If violence has been an issue on site you could:
- Provide people with training to deal with violence e.g. self defence.
- Provide security on site if required.
- Regularly monitor the situation - noting the effects of changes and any remaining problems.
- Remember to have regular conversations with the teams on site to make sure they feel looked after and supported.

Where do we get more information?
The Safety Charter’s Critical Risk Workplace Violence webpage has more information which is regularly updated. You can view it here or by clicking on Improve Health & Safety – Critical Risks – Workplace Violence from the homepage.

If you want toolbox talks on the other 12 critical risks you can check them out online.

Employee issues raised:

Date to be resolved by:

Thank you to WorkSafe New Zealand for providing information for this toolbox talk.