

**Preventing Violence
Within Organisations:
A Practical Handbook**

Preventing Violence *Within* Organisations: A Practical Handbook

Claire Mayhew



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Foreword

Violence at work takes many forms and ranges from armed robbery to threats from clients to degrading initiation rituals from other employees. The severity of outcomes varies from homicides to verbal abuse.

This handbook focuses on violence *within* organisations. Such incidents can occur between supervisors and employees, or between one employee and another.

In addition to the intrinsic value of a conflict-free workplace and a harmonious workforce, the prevention of violence within organisations can be profitable. In Australia and overseas, employers have been found liable for failing to prevent workplace violence and have had significant damage claims awarded against them. Diminished productivity in a violent workplace can further detract from the bottom line.

This handbook is written with violence prevention in medium to large sized organisations in mind (sexual harassment prevention is not included, as substantial documentation is widely available). It is a practical handbook and needs to be adapted specifically to each organisation for best results. An abbreviated version will also be published which is more suitable for organisations with fewer than 20 employees.

Adam Graycar

Director, Australian Institute of Criminology

July 2000

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Abbreviations

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| CAL/OSHA | California Occupational Safety and Health Administration |
| CCTV | Closed Circuit Television |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| DETIR | Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations |
| EAP | Employee Assistance Program |
| EEO | Equal Employment Opportunity |
| HRM | Human Resource Management |
| MSFU | Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union |
| NOHSC | National Occupational Health and Safety Commission |
| OHS | Occupational Health and Safety |
| OOS | Occupational Overuse Syndrome |
| PSC | Public Service Commission |
| RSI | Repetitive Strain Injury |
| UNISON | A large public sector union in the United Kingdom |
| USOPM | United States Office of Personnel Management |
| WCBBC | Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia |
| WHC | Workers' Health Centre |

Executive Summary

Occupational violence is a problem with significant legal, economic, and emotional consequences for employers and individuals.

The Australian Institute of Criminology is producing a series of publications on occupational violence. The first was *Violence in the Workplace* by Santina Perrone. Subsequently, an annotated bibliography of the scientific literature on prevention strategies was compiled and placed on the Institute's website for general access (see www.aic.gov.au/directories). This database was developed in conjunction with the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission. In addition, a series of three handbooks with practical advice on the prevention of occupational violence was produced. This first handbook focuses on prevention of violence that arises *within* an organisation; that is, between a supervisor and an employee or between one employee and another. Subsequent handbooks address prevention of *client-initiated* violence, such as between social workers and their clients; and the prevention of violence during *armed hold-ups* and robberies. These handbooks are designed for medium to large-sized organisations.

Violence *within* organisations is committed by individuals who have, or have had, some form of an employment relationship with the organisation. The incident may involve (a) a "one-off" physical act of violence that results in a fatal or non-fatal injury or no obvious injury; or (b) some form of bullying or harassment. In this latter case, sometimes multiple perpetrators may be involved (for example, mobbing) and more than one recipient, and the events may be repeated over time (for example, initiation rituals).

Behaviours can include:

- verbal abuse and intimidation;
- denigration;
- isolation;
- taking credit for work without acknowledgment;
- making competent recipients appear incompetent;
- inducing exhaustion through work overload;
- initiation and "bastardisation" rituals;
- threats; and/or
- physical assault.

This handbook includes discussions on:

- the importance of employer/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) commitment to zero-tolerance of violence;
- some of the economic and personal impacts from violence;
- an outline of risk identification, risk assessment, and risk control procedures applied to violence that arises within organisations;
- the statutory legal responsibilities of employers/managers to provide a safe and healthy worksite and work process under Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation;
- other legislative instruments that can be applied to violence within organisations;
- the need for written violence prevention policy and strategy documents, and implementation of these;
- different management styles that may encourage, or impede, violence *within* organisations; and
- a series of detailed draft violence prevention policy and strategy documents and checklists which employers can adopt and adapt to specific on-site conditions.

Background and Introduction

Occupational violence is an issue with significant legal, economic, and emotional impacts on employers and individuals. There is only limited Australian data on incidence and minimal prevention strategy advice is available. The Australian Institute of Criminology is committed to the production of prevention advice to reduce occupational violence.

Occupational violence can result in a fatal incident, a serious physical injury, or emotional damage and hurt. While weapons may be involved, most incidents in Australia involve verbal abuse and threats.

Occupational violence is the attempted or actual exercise by a person of any force so as to cause injury to a worker, including any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe he or she is at risk (NOHSC 1999, p. 1).

A useful typology is to separate occupational violence into three categories.

- Internal violence, such as between supervisor/employee or employee/employee.
- Random public violence that impacts on employers and employees, for example during armed hold-ups.
- Client-initiated violence which may be systemic in some human services, justice, and health and welfare occupations, as well as in some commercial settings.

This handbook focuses specifically on the prevention of internal violence. The Australian Institution of Criminology believes that prevention, rather than post-incident reaction, is the key to improved outcomes. However, the handbook needs to be adapted specifically to each organisation for best results. The discussions exclude activity that could be described as sexual harassment, which is extensively dealt with elsewhere. Following an overview of prevention approaches, a series of possible policy/strategy/checklist documents are provided as appendices. It is hoped

that organisations will find these documents useful in assisting the development of their own violence prevention strategies and documents (Further reports will be produced to assist with the prevention of other forms of violence. See Perrone 1999).

Definition and Characteristics of Internal Violent Incidents

Internal violent events are committed by an individual who has, or has had, some form of an employment relationship with the organisation. The incident may be between supervisor/employee or employee/employee. The incident may involve (a) a “one-off” physical act of violence that results in a fatal or non-fatal injury or no obvious injury; or (b) some form of bullying or harassment. In this latter case, sometimes multiple perpetrators may be involved (for example, mobbing) and more than one recipient, and the events may be repeated over time (for example, during initiation rites).

Occupational violence can include verbal abuse, threats, physical violence, “behaviours that create an environment of fear”, stalking, bullying amongst workers or between managers and workers, and behaviours that lead to stress or avoidance behaviour in the recipient. For night and shiftworkers, those who work alone, apprentices, or those in insecure employment, the risks may be exacerbated.

What the Law Requires

Every employee has a legal and human right to a work environment that is safe, and to safe systems of work. Improved OHS is not just about reducing legal liability for employers.

Statutory law states that employers have a primary duty to ensure, so far as is practicable, the health and safety of all people on a worksite. This requirement is detailed under the OHS legislation in each Australian State and Territory. The OHS duty of care provisions include protecting people from violence. In particular, the preventive thrust of the OHS legislation requires the prevention of “foreseeable risk”. The usual process is for risks to be assessed through inspection of the worksite and work process to identify and control hazards and risks. The process of risk identification, risk assessment, and risk control is explicit under the OHS Acts or subsidiary

legislation in most Australian States and Territories. This process requires identification of the extent and nature of risks, the factors that contribute to risks, the changes necessary to eliminate or control the risks, and the monitoring and evaluation of the risk control process. That is, violence must be treated in a similar way to other OHS risks. Where an employer is aware of the potential for occupational violence, a court could interpret the risks as “foreseeable”. In such a case where the employer failed to take preventive action, he was held liable by the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court and an award of \$108,126 was made to the recipient (Campbell 2000, p. 5). All employees also have a duty to not put other workers at risk of injury (which includes violence as well as other risks), to comply with organisational policy and procedures, to report incidents, and to support arrangements to control risks (the website address of each Australian State and Territory OHS authority is listed at the end of this handbook).

Recipients of occupational violence may also pursue remedies under a broad range of options under common or civil law, for example constructive dismissal, unfair dismissal, personal injury claims, and claims for compensation. Under common law, the more foreseeable the risk, the greater the duty to prevent.

Through vicarious liability, an employer is also required to ensure that one employee does not act inappropriately towards another. The courts have regularly recognised that employers are vicariously liable when their employees have acted illegally or negligently during employment, or where the business created or enhanced risks, and there is a significant connection between the risk and the wrongful act. To reduce the risks of vicarious liability, employers can disseminate information on acceptable and non-acceptable standards of behaviour, implement training programs, and instigate a system of monitoring and review. For example, in the case of *Arnold v. Midwest Radio Ltd* on 7 April 1998 in the Supreme Court of Queensland, the employer was found to be vicariously liable for the acts of a bullying manager who abused his position of power over another employee (see also apprentice case studies discussed in Neales 1997).

Anti-discrimination legislation prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual preference, age, and union membership. Sex discrimination Acts can apply if a male is bullying a female. Similarly, if colleagues who are predominantly Caucasian persecute individuals from racial minorities, or vice versa, this may be a form of racial discrimination—which is prohibited

under racial discrimination Acts. Vicarious liability also applies in anti-discrimination law.

If people are dismissed or forced to resign as a consequence of bullying, and due process has not been followed, federal or state unfair dismissal legislation may be used for re-instatement and/or compensation (Spry 1998, p. 241). If there is a physical assault, the violent incident becomes a police matter and Criminal Codes apply.

A newspaper employee in Queensland was subjected to:

- *constant, repetitious, and extreme foul and abusive language;*
- *threats of dismissal;*
- *false statements that she intended to take sexual harassment proceedings against another staff member;*
- *obstruction in the performance of her duties;*
- *false accusations of criminal activity; and*
- *a request for her to procure someone to murder a person.*

Outcome: The employer was found to have breached his duty of care and was vicariously liable for the behaviour of the manager towards another staff member. The recipient was awarded \$549,220.83 by the Supreme Court of Queensland, although this is being appealed.

Management Style

Management style and organisational culture can influence the propensity for internal violence. It is often difficult to make a clear distinction between “bad management” that contributes to a violent culture and inappropriately coercive management behaviour. Irrespective of intent, primary legal responsibility for prevention of occupational violence rests with the employer or their delegated representative, for example the CEO.

A highly competitive business environment with increased competition between workers can elevate stress levels and increase the potential for violence. Quasi-military hierarchical and rigid management styles, and marked supervisor/employee divisions, exacerbate a “them and us” culture, foster resentment and anger, and increase the probability of violent events.

The United States Postal Service has been frequently cited as an example of this type of organisational culture where abuse and mistrust exacerbate tensions (Witkowski 1995, p. 216).

Nonetheless, there are a few specific jobs that require “role play” exposure to intimidation and extreme stress during training and re-training periods. For example, verbal harassment and extreme physical demands are standard during some aspects of training in the military—in order to prepare recruits for possible capture by a future enemy and to enhance survival chances. Such legitimate training is distinctly different to the occasional reports of non-sanctioned initiation/bastardisation rituals inflicted by perpetrators who were themselves victimised as cadets, for example in the Australian navy.

Other violence risk factors include: management toleration of bullying, job insecurity, workers facing unemployment with little chance of re-employment, workers with a strong sense of entitlement who feel cheated, vengeful workers, a loss of self-esteem and stability among workers, and disciplinary suspensions (see Randall 1997, pp. 50–53; Mullen 1997, pp. 23–24; Witkowski 1995, p. 216; Seger 1993, p. 140). The advancement of female workers may further contribute to the resentment felt by some males who perceive they have been passed over unfairly (Mullen 1997, p. 25).

A “culture of denial” of lower-level violence may exist in some organisations. Similar denials have been documented in other areas of OHS when new diseases first emerged, for example, with Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS), previously known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) and stress. When the number of OOS and stress cases first began to increase rapidly in Australia, the disbelief was frequently greeted with scepticism and an attitude now known as “blame the victim”. This lack of early recognition and preventive action resulted in significant workers’ compensation and legal costs for employers.

Thus encouraging a participatory management style, fostering teamwork, ensuring due process is always followed, and improving employer/employee communication will help reduce the potential for violence (Editor 1995, p. 29). Because there is a documented link between violence and employment insecurity, where employment changes are anticipated, they should be carried out in a manner that minimises the potential for violence within the organisation.

Typical Internal Violent (or Bullying) Behaviour

While some inappropriate behaviour arises (and continues) through simple “bad management” rather than malicious intent, aggression can be scaled on a continuum of: abuse, covert threats, overt intimidation, and physical assaults. Irrespective of whether bad management or overt aggression leads to violence, the legal liability of the employer/CEO remains. The considerable impacts on recipients also occur independently of motive.

Verbal abuse and threats are the most common forms of internal violence. An important feature is that these behaviours are usually repeated and the incidents generally escalate in intensity over time. While internal violence is usually face-to-face, inappropriate behaviour can be communicated via telephone, email, or through exclusion of the recipient. These perpetrators of violence (or bullies) act as they do because of envy, fear of their own inadequacy, experience of childhood bullying, provocation, and an inability to manage their own aggression (Gates 1997, p. 32). The recipients are commonly more attractive, confident, successful, qualified, and popular than the perpetrators, or may be different in some way, for example ethnicity or age (Gaymer 1999, p. 12). While some bullying activities are obvious, others are subtle and covert. Sometimes inappropriate behaviour has developed slowly over time and perpetrators may not even be aware of the impact of their conduct.

The following behaviours may be either appropriate supervisory actions, where employees are not performing to expected levels, or early warning signs of an escalating pattern of aggression.

- Removal of responsibilities and replacement with trivial tasks.
- Refusing to delegate because they will not trust anyone else.
- Monopolising recipients to encourage dependence.
- Taking credit for good work done by recipient without acknowledgment.

An escalated level of violence *within* an organisation can include the following behaviours (from supervisors or other workers).

- Verbal abuse, shouting, intimidation, and sarcasm.
- Constant criticism or denigration of people in front of others or in private.

- Damaging the property of the recipient and/or the employer.
- Inducing exhaustion through work overload and reduction of deadlines.
- Blocking recipient's promotion prospects without justification.
- Isolating and excluding recipients.
- Initiation or "bastardisation" rituals.
- Deliberate insults through offensive pictures and images.
- Stalking, loitering, or repeated following.
- Setting out to make competent employees appear incompetent or make their lives miserable, in the hope of getting them dismissed or forcing resignation.
- Threat of assault or actual physical assault (police may need to be called at this stage).

(See Workers' Health Centre (WHC) 1999, p. 1; Chappell and Di Martino 1998, p. 11; Sheehan et al. 1998, p. 32; Neales 1997; McCarthy et al. 1996; UNISON 1996; Spiers 1995, p. 381)

The second series of dot points above are clear indicators of an unacceptable misuse of power; the toleration of it within some organisations has been described as a "systemic failure" (Tidwell 1998, p. 590). Some writers have argued that internal violence (or bullying) should be discussed separately to other forms of occupational violence (for example, Barron 1998), but this distinction is not addressed in this handbook. Rather, inappropriately coercive behaviour, bullying, threats, and physical violence are interpreted as a continuum of aggressive behaviours.

The Direction of Violent Behaviour

Inappropriate coercive behaviours and overt violence can occur between a range of people on a worksite. The direction of activities is not always a simple abuse of power from supervisors to subordinate employees: employees can harass their supervisors, older workers can intimidate apprentices, or males can terrorise young females. Covert malicious intent distinguishes internal occupational violence from normal supervisor/employee or employee/employee interactions. Whatever the direction of the violent behaviour, employers need to take action to prevent

the inappropriate conduct as they have several levels of liability that can be laid open. In the paragraphs below, a few case examples describe how the inappropriate behaviours were manifested.

Vertical (Supervisor/Employee)

The Public Service Commission (1994, p. 3) has distinguished “normal” supervisory behaviours from intimidation:

Workplace harassment must not be confused with legitimate comment and advice (including relevant negative comment and feedback) from managers and supervisors on the work performance or work related behaviour of an individual or group. Feedback on work performance or work related behaviour differs from harassment in that feedback is intended to assist staff to improve work performance or the standard of their behaviour (Public Service Commission (PSC) 1994, p. 3).

Nonetheless, there have been a significant number of Australian cases where the employer has been found liable for inappropriate supervisor behaviour to a subordinate. In the following case, for example, the employer was found liable for unfair dismissal of an employee who had been ill and who had experienced a poor working relationship with her supervisors.

A community development officer was appointed to an Australian Island on a 2-year contract that was later extended. Subsequently, a new council was appointed which did not wish to retain her services. She was then:

- obstructed in performance of her duties;*
- subject to rumours and innuendo as to her sexual preferences;*
- criticised for being “that feminist woman”;*
- she became ill and was unable to work for 4 months;*
- after her health improved she was told not to return to work and was discharged; and*
- the council argued that in the past she found the workplace a hostile one and so reinstatement would be impractical.*

Outcome: The court ordered that she be reinstated and compensated for lost remuneration.

Vertical (Employee/Supervisor)

There are occasional instances when Australian employees subject supervisors/employers to violence. For example, in 1999 a casual café worker at La Trobe University in Melbourne shot his supervisor (in the United States such shootings are relatively common). In a less severe incident from Queensland, the employer was found *not* to be liable after an appointment was not renewed after a probationary period.

An academic was appointed to a 5-year position that was tenurable if her performance was judged satisfactory:

- *there was a history of difficult relationships with other staff members;*
- *shortly after appointment she commenced a campaign for promotion and tenure;*
- *directions were given for comprehensive file notes to be kept of her conduct; and*
- *the Dean of the Faculty where she was employed was subject to a “constant barrage” of complaints which he found very stressful and debilitating.*

Outcome: The court found that she “was imbued with the culture of complaint and a self-centred drive to pursue issues of personal grievance at all costs”.

Her appointment with the University ceased.

(cited in Spry 1998, p. 238)

Horizontal (Employee/Employee)

There have been a number of cases where the violence occurred between employees, yet in court the employer has been commonly found to be vicariously liable. In the case of *Australian Postal Corporation v. Bywater*, the recipient was subjected to harassment from other workers after she reported thefts by another employee (Spry 1998, p. 232). With Jane Hill, resentment was fuelled by an unpopular Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy that was not adequately implemented by management. Eventually the recipient was transferred, a unit was closed down, offending employees re-located, and considerable costs incurred by the New South Wales Water Resources Commission (Grabosky 1989, pp.173–83). In the case of *Arnold v. Midwest Radio Ltd* (described on page 4), the employer ordered the perpetrator to initiate a cost-cutting exercise to make the business a

profitable one. Harassment of Arnold and restrictions on her expenses (such as interstate phone access) resulted in a severe impact on the recipient—for which the employer was found vicariously liable.

Employee/Apprentice

The inappropriate behaviour of employees towards apprentices has resulted in a number of recent court appearances, many initiated by the OHS authorities for breach of the duty of care requirements. In many cases, the employee perpetrators had been subject to similar behaviour earlier in their working lives. A few apprentices who were recipients of violent behaviour also admitted in court that they had taken part in similar acts to younger workers (see Job Watch 1999). Behaviours such as initiation rites or “bastardisation” have also led to serious injuries for recipients—and large fines for employers and employee perpetrators.

A Victorian apprentice was abused repeatedly between the ages of 17 and 21, including:

- *paint put in his hair;*
- *rolled around in a drum;*
- *pinned in a vice by his overalls;*
- *grease applied to his genitals; and*
- *threatened with a grease gun up his anus if he did not bring a cake to work.*

Outcome: The court awarded the apprentice \$350,000.

Consequences of Internal Violence

Any form of violence can have serious effects on the workforce, employer, and recipient, and negative productivity and profitability impacts can even threaten organisational survival. Potential consequences include: (a) high levels of anxiety, depression, stress-related illness, as well as absenteeism and turnover amongst recipients; (b) diminished productivity, job satisfaction, morale, and employee involvement; and (c) poor industrial relations; and (d) difficulties in recruiting and retaining valued staff (see Randall 1997, p. 57; Wynne et al. 1996, p. 16; UNISON 1996; Reynolds 1994, pp. 35–36; Cardy 1992, p. 32).

If inappropriate behaviours have been tolerated or ignored for some time, the perpetrator may have come to believe this behaviour is acceptable and normal, or that this is the only way to get “the best” out of employees or fellow workers. Firm support for the recipient and enforcement of behavioural change for the perpetrator (with independent monitoring) may be needed in such cases.

If their employment is insecure, recipients may be less willing to report lower-level violence because of job loss fears. The personal emotional trauma and costs from perceived or real threats may be considerable and cumulate. Depression amongst recipients is likely to be significantly exacerbated by non-supportive colleagues who wish to avoid involvement and protect their own jobs, and so they ignore the pain experienced by recipients, exclude them, and may even “blame the victim”. The violence prevention policy and strategies, and the CEO, should require sufficient precautions to ensure that recipients are not further victimised.

Management Action Required

Demonstrated top management/CEO commitment to non-violence is of core importance. Some suggested baseline documents have been included in this handbook to assist employers and employees in meeting their legal obligations in the prevention of violence. These documents are generic tools and will need to be adapted and tailored to reduce the specific risk factors within each individual organisation. The commitment to violence prevention should be clearly stated in an organisational mission statement (see Appendix 1) and through a violence prevention policy (Appendix 2). Both should be publicly displayed and widely disseminated, and be made explicit in the stated goals of the strategic plan. The policy also has to be seen to be applied consistently and fairly across all sectors of the workforce. The organisation can self-assess the extent to which it has met legal requirements through a legal vulnerability checklist test (Appendix 3). A clear CEO statement of commitment to zero-tolerance of internal violence is needed, together with a statement that non-compliance will lead to disciplinary action (Appendix 4). There has to be widespread communication of the violence prevention policy and strategies and of the CEO’s statement (Appendix 5).

The Risk Identification, Risk Assessment and Risk Control Process

The process of risk identification, risk assessment, and risk control is now standard practice to control OHS risks in Australian jurisdictions. Each stage of the prevention process needs to be comprehensively completed before the next step commences; the full process is then repeated at regular intervals.



Violence *within* organisations is most readily controlled through the same process, although additional attention must be paid to the hidden nature of much violence and the need for organisational learning (Wynne et al. 1996, p. 43). The following pages detail the procedures to be undertaken, but these will need to be adapted specifically to the circumstances of each organisation.

Risk Identification

A formal risk identification process must identify the extent and nature of the risks, the circumstances under which risks arise, causes, and potential contributing factors.

If assaults and intimidatory behaviours have occurred in the past, the frequency, severity, and characteristics of perpetrators and recipients need to be formally documented. Proper documentation of incidents is important for an organisation to learn by its experiences, and this documentation needs to be reviewed at the highest level. Those responsible for OHS need to identify what measures have been taken to stop the inappropriate behaviours, ascertain if the preventive strategies implemented have been adequate, and

whether the outcomes have been objectively evaluated. A regular violence audit is an important part of the preventive strategy (Appendix 6).

Improper behaviours such as “horseplay”, scuffling, practical jokes, or unnecessary running or jumping that may constitute a risk, contribute to risk, or add to a culture where intimidatory behaviour may be tolerated, should be clearly prohibited (Workers’ Compensation Board of British Columbia (WCBBC) 1995, p. 8).

Frequent turnover of staff in an area, particularly those who are distinctive in some way (for example, ethnicity, gender, and youth) may be a warning sign that violence is occurring. It is also important to note that recipients of violence are likely to have at least twice the rate of stress-related conditions compared with non-victims (Speer 1997, p. 10). Other risk factors for stress are well known, for example long hours, work overload, and lack of control—all of which may compound stresses that contribute to violence.

WorkCover Victoria has prosecuted a number of employers (and other employees) for bullying and bastardisation of apprentices. Again, vicarious liability provisions can apply. In the following case, the mother of the apprentice became aware of the inappropriate behaviour when her son was lying in bed, did not want to get up to go to work and numerous injuries were visible; the mother then initiated action (see Neales 1997). Notably, the apprentice had not spoken to anyone about the violence.

In a series of incidents, a 16-year-old Victorian apprentice motor mechanic was:

- *bound, placed in an empty 60-litre oil drum and had his lower legs set alight;*
- *bound, placed on top of a coke machine, and tied to a pole;*
- *had a flame from an aerosol pack flared at him while in the toilet; and*
- *had a car driven at him (braking at the last moment) which injured his arm.*

Outcome: The company pleaded guilty to the charges and was fined \$45,000 by the court; one employee pleaded guilty and was fined \$2,000 plus \$4,288.50 court costs, and another moved overseas and has not yet been charged. The recipient still suffers nightmares and depression.

Numerous studies have suggested that violence rarely “comes out of the blue”, but is commonly preceded by behaviour that indicates a potential for violence (Speer 1997, p. 8). The best predictor of future aggression remains past aggressive behaviour. Supervisors or employees with a history of assaults, or who have exhibited belligerent, intimidating or threatening behaviours, are higher risk (Chappell and Di Martino 1998, p. 56; Cherry and Upston 1997, p. 12). White males in the age range 30–50, who are married with families, and who have been employed with the organisation for some time may be more common perpetrators of violence (Dale et al. 1997, p. 10; Capozzoli and McVey 1996, p. 50; Heskett 1996, p. 43). Recent or imminent job loss can be another high-risk factor (Myers 1996, p. 3).

Nevertheless, relying on profiles is a dangerous practice, as violence has been committed by a range of people under a variety of circumstances. One poll found 35 per cent of Australians had been on the receiving end of verbal abuse from a co-worker, and 31 per cent from a supervisor (Roy Morgan Research Centre 1998, p. 1).

Violent behaviour can be scaled according to the intensity of the aggressive behaviour and the degree of threat. Warning signs of bullying behaviour have been well documented by the Queensland OHS authority.

Warning Signs of Existing Bullying Behaviour

- Yelling, screaming, abuse, insults, and inappropriate comments about a person’s lifestyle or appearance.
- Constant criticism or belittling.
- Isolating a worker from normal interactions and opportunities.
- Unnecessary pressure and overwork.
- Underwork creating a feeling of uselessness in the worker.
- Undermining of work performance through withholding of resources or information.
- Meaningless tasks, unexplained changes.
- Tampering with a worker’s personal belongings or equipment.
- Making a worker the brunt of practical jokes.
- Displaying offensive or degrading material or written materials.
- Unreasonable administrative delays, for example, in processing leave applications.

(Division of Workplace Health and Safety 1998, pp. 7–8)

However, bullying or verbal abuse situations may escalate into more serious forms of violence.

Warning Signs of Escalating Internal Violence

Early potential: devalues people, refuses to cooperate, challenges authority, personality conflicts, regularly argumentative, originates and spreads lies about others, swears excessively and/or uses sexually explicit language, veiled threats, verbally abuses co-workers, increased mood swings, unprovoked outbursts of anger or emotion, sexually harassing, and unexplained increase in absenteeism.

Escalated potential: argues frequently and intensely, blatantly disregards organisational policies and procedures, throws/sabotages/steals equipment or property, sets traps for others, makes overt verbal threats to hurt co-workers or supervisors, sends violent or sexual comments via email/voicemail/letter, blames others for all difficulties, and sees self as victim.

Urgent signs: fascination with weapons, substance abuse, severe stress, violent or harassment history, marked changes in psychological functioning, decreased or inconsistent productivity, exotic claims (losing touch with reality), social isolation or poor peer relationships, poor personal hygiene, and drastic changes in personality.

Realised potential: destruction of property, involved in physical confrontations or commits assaults, displays and/or uses weapons, commits sexual assaults/arson/suicide.

(see United States Office of Personnel Management (USOPM) 1998, p. 17; Davis 1997, pp. 11, 14, 21, 30, 54; Randall 1997, pp. 53–54; Speer 1997, p. 8; Heskett 1996, p. 45; Kinney 1996, p. 307; Editor 1995, p. 29; Witkowski 1995, p. 216; Seger 1993, p. 141)

There have been a number of instances when warning signs were present and threats were made, but no preventive action was taken—with fatal consequences.

An insurance company worker in Florida was fired. At the time he said to other workers “you ain’t seen the last of me”:

- *6 months later he returned to the worksite with a gun;*
- *said to the human resource manager “this is what you get for firing me”;*
- *shot the human resource manager;*
- *fatally shot two other men;*
- *injured two women; and*
- *then shot himself.*

(Heskett 1996, p. 49)

A checklist of possible warning signs appears as Appendix 7. These warning signs are particularly relevant for risk assessment in escalating scenarios and for serious incident prevention.

Risk Assessment

Regular *systematic* occupational violence audits/risk assessments (Appendix 6) provide a baseline for prevention planning. The level of detail in risk assessment should be broadly proportional to the risk; that is, objective assessment of the probability and likely severity of an incident and existing violence control measures (see WorkSafe Western Australia 1999; WorkCover New South Wales 1999). Wishful thinking (“it can’t happen here”) should be avoided.

It is important that *all* incidents be recorded (see possible report form in Appendix 8). Past incident records need to be grouped, analysed, and the incidence patterns identified. These can be separated into severity categories (major, minor, and near miss events), perpetrator and recipient characteristics, possible causes/contributing factors, departments or units, activities of concern, or other risk factors such as time of day or night. Violence is often predictable and preventable when the evidence is examined objectively (Warshaw and Messite 1996, p. 993).

During investigations, all available information needs to be recorded with a separate incident form completed for each event (Appendix 8). Incidents of abuse, verbal attack, or aggressive behaviour that do not result in a physical injury should all be recorded. Any of these behaviours are a breach of the policy and may indicate a potential for future tragedies. The timespan within which incidents must be reported should be specified, for example, as soon as possible, but no later than 3 working days. Immediate reporting is required for serious events and risks, for example an employee bringing a weapon on-site or an assault. Inevitably, the sooner the report is submitted, the sooner an investigation will commence (which is particularly important for police enquiries).

Incident Investigation Schedule

The following facts are required.

- Type of incident—for example, bullying, threats, or assaults.
- Who was assaulted/bullied and their position in the hierarchy/area of work.
- Description of the location where the incident took place.
- Activity underway at the time.
- Time of occurrence/day of week.
- Nature of injuries sustained.
- How the incident arose and progressed (narrative data).
- Contributing causes.
- Lost time.
- Potential or actual costs.
- Corrective action recommended.
- Follow-up checks, for example changes in controls.

(Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996, p. 28)

Groups at specific risk of being harmed, or harming, need to be identified. Identification of characteristics of the workforce may help in this process. For example, if females are concentrated at lower levels of the hierarchy and males in higher positions, gender-based harassment may be more likely. Or, if the skills of sections of the workforce become outmoded during downsizing/restructuring and re-training is not available, anxieties and tendencies to violence may be exacerbated in some specific vulnerable groups.

Those who are the recipients of inappropriate behaviour should also keep a record of incidents and actions (Appendix 9).

A *verbal* as well as a written violence audit should be conducted intermittently (see possible survey form in Appendix 10). The aim of a verbal audit is to find out if incidents are not being reported for fear of victimisation or because it may reflect badly on recipients. Evidence suggests bullying often escalates after recipients confront perpetrators, and so people may be unwilling to lodge formal complaints (Rayner 1998, pp. 583–84; Sheehan and Barker 1998; Gates 1997, p. 32). Further, if anyone or any group is under significant stress, this may be revealed in an anonymous survey. It is important that independent and *trusted* people do this verbal stocktake, for example union representatives or OHS committee members. This process may identify what really happens, as opposed to instructions, official policies, or written records. Maintenance of anonymity is essential.

Economic influences should also be considered during the violence audit/risk assessment process, for example the likelihood of downsizing in the near future and competing priorities for management. One consequence may be short-term productivity pressures overriding stress management guidelines.

Feedback on the formal and informal violence audit/risk assessment outcomes should then be provided to all staff. If there are no problems cited, suspicions may be allayed (WCBBC 1995, p. 4; Lamplugh 1994, pp. 4–5).

Risk Control

The risk control process should be introduced systematically, based on objective evidence. The overt commitment of management/CEO is of core importance for violence prevention, as is the establishment of an ambience or culture that will not tolerate any form of aggression on-site. If the risks

cannot be eliminated, then work environment arrangements should be reconfigured to minimise the risks (WCBBC 1995, p. 4). A mix of risk control measures will usually be most effective (see Peek-Asa and Howard 1999; Schneid 1998, p. 24; Nalla et al. 1996, p. 95).

The OHS Committee Role in Violence Prevention

The OHS committee has a central role in any comprehensive violence prevention or risk control strategy. Tasks and strategies overseen should include violence prevention, security arrangements, emergency/crisis response management, incident reporting procedures, post-incident support, training programs, the introduction of interventions, and the monitoring and evaluation process. Management nominees, elected employee representatives, and all those with OHS responsibilities, should be members of the OHS committee. Ideally, an equal number of employer and employee members will be appointed or elected (see specified legislative requirements and duties for each State). In addition, employees are more likely to be committed to the violence policy and strategies if they or their representatives have input into the design of the risk assessment and risk control measures and are involved with putting them into action. All OHS committee members should take an active role to ensure that the violence prevention policy, strategy, and regular audits are comprehensive in coverage and adequately implemented. A violence contact officer should be nominated who is acceptable to all sections of the workforce and his/her name should be widely publicised.

Minutes of OHS committee meetings should be recorded and interventions, actions, and evaluations filed and dated. Records of all violence audits, other inspections, and training conducted should also be maintained (Appendices 6, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 15; and WorkSafe Western Australia 1999). Any marked gender/ethnicity variations in incidents should be noted. Similarly, the placing of a young female in a predominantly male environment may require monitoring (Job Watch 1999, p. 8). If records are kept up-to-date, any improvements resulting from interventions should be easy to track. Similarly, new or emerging risks will be clearly apparent. All staff should be aware of this process and be familiar with the use of the checklists.

Security Plan Role in Violence Prevention

The OHS Committee needs to consider and plan for potential emergencies on-site (for example, an ex-employee with a knife). Engineering and administrative controls are often very effective in removing or reducing such

risks. One United States example of a weapons prohibition statement for an organisation that could be adapted for Australian organisations and different weapons is:

Whoever knowingly possesses or causes to be present a firearm or other dangerous weapon in a Federal facility, or attempts to do so, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both (cited in USOPM 1998, p. 23).

However, special prevention measures may need to be implemented for those who work alone. For example, this could include periodic checking of their well-being, predetermined interval phone-ins, personal alarms, or visual checking by workers in adjacent premises. If a particular individual is a known risk (for example, a delivery person), the identity of the individual and the nature of the risk should be given to “at risk” staff *but not indiscriminately distributed* (WCBBC 1995, p. 5). Following any emergency or breach of security, post-incident assessment, demobilisation, diffusing or debriefing, and evaluation procedures should be routine. A possible internal violence security measures checklist appears as Appendix 11, and a possible security plan audit form as Appendix 12 (see USOPM 1998, p. 22).

Training for Violence Prevention

Training for violence prevention should be included in induction and re-training courses as well as for “at risk” staff. Records of this training should be kept. Topics covered should include the policy and strategies in place; risk identification, risk assessment, and risk control procedures; warning signs of potential violence and appropriate responses; security provisions and emergency plans; interpersonal relations and skills for diffusing aggression; and incident reporting procedures. It should be impressed on participants that the failure to report one incident may put others at risk later. A possible outline of a violence prevention training course appears as Appendix 13 and the resources needed in Appendix 14.

Pre-employment Tools

It is generally easier to prevent violence arising in the first place than it is to intervene after inappropriate behaviours have commenced. Pre-employment processes can include careful screening of potential employees to reduce the likelihood of hiring those who have previously engaged in violence. For example, careful reading of applications, checking of work history for rapid turnover of jobs, scrutiny of references, and clarification of reasons for

periods away from work can reduce the risk of inappropriate hiring (see Randall 1997, p. 53; Wilkinson 1998, pp. 67,187).

Post-incident Support

Sensitive and appropriate support can reduce suffering through proper care of a person who has been subjected to violence. The recipient should be informed about what will happen once the formal report has been lodged, told exactly what action will be taken, and be given clear information about the expected timelines. Throughout the ensuing stages, the recipient should continue to be regularly informed on progress and provided with clear information on expected outcomes. Any person with an injury or adverse symptom should be encouraged to consult a physician of his/her choice (WCBBC 1995, p. 6), referred to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), or debriefed through appropriate personnel. If the recipient is unable to perform his/her former duties as a result of the incident(s), a change of duties or location should be arranged if possible, without prejudice to future prospects. Where possible the perpetrator, rather than the recipient, of violence should be relocated. The recipient or the organisation may wish to initiate grievance procedures.

Establishment of Grievance/Mediation Procedures

Allegations require open acknowledgment that a problem of some sort exists. Formal procedures should be initiated as a matter of urgency, using EAP or other mediators, and with an agreed timetable (see a detailed outline in USOPM 1998, pp. 23–25, 73–75). Otherwise, inappropriate behaviours may continue and escalate. Immediate action to stop the behaviour may also reduce litigation. Total CEO commitment to prevention is essential (Rayner 1998, p. 583). The mediator must be well versed in the violence prevention policy and strategies, fully understand potential impacts on recipients, have detailed knowledge of appeal processes, be aware of typical overt and covert behaviours adopted by perpetrators, and have a sensitive manner. Careful preparation and documentation are absolutely essential. It is unwise to hold initial meetings with both the perpetrator and the recipient present. The need for total confidentiality must be stressed to all parties.

The recipient(s) of internal violence should be interviewed first. Recipients should be encouraged to report all incidents as early intervention may stop further incidents. The complaint may initially be verbal and lodged with the specified contact person, union delegate, a nominated Human Resource Management (HRM) staff member, or the immediate supervisor (if he or she

is part of the problem, then this is not appropriate). The recipient is entitled to have a support person present at mediation meetings. At work, he or she may need to be protected from retaliation. A group grievance from all affected parties may be appropriate if there is more than one recipient.

Alleged perpetrators should be interviewed after the recipient(s) and when detailed documentation has been compiled. At the initial meeting between the appointed mediator and the alleged perpetrator, firm management of the process will be necessary. Natural justice and due process require that the alleged perpetrator should be informed of the accusations, have a right to respond, and for an unbiased decision. The alleged perpetrator is also entitled to have a support person present (if both recipient and alleged perpetrator request the presence of union representatives, then careful prior negotiations with the relevant union will be needed). If the incident is severe or repeated, immediate disciplinary action will need to be taken, for example suspension on full pay. The whole grievance/mediation process should be handled carefully.

Guidelines for Mediation Meeting with Alleged Violence Perpetrator

- *Detailed preparation:* careful documentation of the inappropriate behaviour, any evidence, prior liaison with other relevant staff (for example, EAP and security), and objective assessment of evidence.
- *Equity:* the alleged perpetrator is entitled to have a support person present (as is the recipient in prior discussions).
- *Address all the issues.*
- *Address only the issues,* for example objective specific feedback.
- *Offer options:* resources available, for example EAP, formal apology, or transfer.
- *Be flexible:* allow alleged perpetrator to express concerns, but keep focused.
- *Avoid verbal one-upmanship* and digressive arguments that may be introduced.
- It may be appropriate to allow the employee to go home after the discussion to think about the issues raised.

(Davis 1997, pp. 117–66)

The detailed model protocol developed by WorkCover New South Wales (1999, pp. 4–10) may be a “best practice” option.

Disciplinary Action: Transfers/Suspension/Termination of Employment

Disciplinary action may be necessary as the zero-tolerance policy has to be seen to be enforced.

It is important that the employer immediately contact the police if a criminal act, such as an assault, has occurred. Criminal acts proven on investigation can be dismissible offences. Thus employers should have in their disciplinary policy, or other employment policy, a definition of what constitutes serious misconduct that includes violent acts against coworkers, supervisors, clients, or bringing weapons to work. Reporting to the police can help with obtaining intervention or restraining orders if they are needed. Statements to police can also be used as supporting documentation if the dismissed worker seeks redress through unfair dismissal.

On occasions, mediation procedures for less serious offences will not be effective, behavioural change will not have occurred, a history of repeated incidents is apparent, or counselling has not resulted in change, transfers are not possible, and further disciplinary action, such as discharge, will have to be taken. This disciplinary action may exacerbate risks for the recipient and mediator and others enforcing the decisions. These people at risk need to be protected. Sometimes the warning signs are clear (see Appendix 7) but are ignored—with fatal results.

Patrick Sherrill was a United States postal service employee:

- *he had a history of work problems including aggression; and*
- *he was aware that he faced dismissal.*

Outcome: He walked into the post office in Oklahoma where he worked and killed 14 other workers before taking his own life.

(Duncan cited in Randall 1997, p. 52)

Some possible guidelines to reduce the risks to staff involved with disciplinary action are provided below.

Possible Disciplinary/Discharge Procedures to Reduce Risk of Violence

- All employees must be treated with objectivity, respect and dignity.
- The perpetrator should be allowed to have a support person present.
- A structured interview should be conducted in *private*, and towards the end of the day.
- Mediators performing outplacement should use positive language.
- Outplacement services, re-training, and/or access to EAP should be offered.
- Appropriate appeal and complaint procedures must be explained.
- The specific reasons why a disciplinary discharge is occurring must be provided, but rational responses cannot be expected.
- Discharge on a Friday should be avoided as the perpetrator will not be able to appeal to anyone till Monday, and over the weekend the person's frustration may build.
- Security and reception officers must be alerted prior to the discharge interview.
- All literature and forms must be ready for the discharge interview.
- The last paycheck should be ready for delivery at the exit interview.
- The separation benefit should be fair to support the perpetrator during the job hunting period.
- All devices for access and egress, company credit cards, and electronic communications should be retrieved.
- The employee, perhaps accompanied by security, should remove all belongings from the premises so there will be no excuse to return.
- If the interview is perceived to be "high risk", appropriate support/security persons must be present at the discharge interview.
- Any threats made should be reported immediately to senior management, security and, if necessary, the police.
- In rare cases, restraining orders may be needed.

(adapted from Capozzoli and McVey 1996, p. 103; Heskett 1996, p. 86; Mantell and Albrecht 1994, pp. 166-76; Seger 1993)

Evaluation

Finally, the existing risk control measures should be evaluated. That is, do they work in controlling the identified risk factors? If not, the search for additional preventive interventions should begin—which should also be subsequently evaluated.

The full costs of violence should be calculated. These costs may include violence-induced leave, workers' compensation claims, stress-related illness, downtime, and replacement staff. During estimation and costing calculations, allowance has to be made for the "normal" under-reporting of violent incidents. Another important consideration is that incident recording procedures tend to be poor at recording sensitive emotional and psychological sequelae of violent incidents (Wynne et al. 1996, p. 45). These emotional sequelae have significant detrimental effects on productivity and must be included in calculations.

The organisation, through the OHS committee, should also implement stress management guidelines and encourage staff to avoid excessive working hours—while ensuring that imposed workloads are not excessive.

A possible internal violence prevention policy and strategy evaluation checklist is provided as Appendix 15. The design and implementation of appropriate interventions may be challenging and involve difficult decisions. Shortcomings in management commitment, training/re-training, participation, and resources should be clearly and courageously (where necessary) identified.

Conclusion

Violence within organisations is an occupational health and safety issue with significant legal and economic impacts on employers and recipients. There are few examples of “best practice” prevention in Australia to date but as recognition of the problem grows, improved policies and strategies will emerge. The first step in prevention is the development of an organisational policy and strategy to control the risks. As with other OHS problems, the risk identification, risk assessment, and risk control process has been found to be an effective preventive strategy, as well as being a legal requirement. The possible policy, strategy, and checklist documents provided in this handbook may form the foundation step, but these have to be modified to the particular circumstances and risks in specific organisations. Regular objective reviews of performance are essential. However, violence prevention does not exist separately to other parts of effective organisational planning. Each CEO needs to ensure that all workplace policies complement each other, and that the violence prevention policy and strategy is integrated with the strategic plan and complements EEO and anti-discrimination policies. Probably the most important step is unequivocal top management commitment to an organisational culture where violence in any form is not tolerated.

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Website Addresses for Further Occupational Health and Safety Information and Specific Legislation in Each Australian State and Territory:

Comcare: www.comcare.gov.au

The Division of Workplace Health and Safety (Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, DETIR, Qld): www.detir.qld.gov.au

The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission: www.nohsc@gov.au

The Northern Territory Work Health Authority: www.nt.gov.au/wha

The Victorian WorkCover Authority: www.workcover.vic.gov.au

The WorkCover Corporation of South Australia: www.workcover.sa.gov.au

WorkCover New South Wales: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Workplace Standards Tasmania: www.wsa.tas.gov.au

WorkSafe Western Australia: www.safetyline.wa.gov.au

Appendices: Possible Prevention Policy and Strategy Documents and Checklists

Appendix 1

Possible Mission Statement on Internal Violence

This organisation aims to provide a working environment that promotes courtesy, trust, equity, and mutual respect across the workforce. All acts of threatening behaviour, bullying, harassment, intimidation, threats, and physical violence are expressly prohibited. In order to ensure widespread adoption of our zero-tolerance policy, a consultative framework involving management, employees, and others on-site will be maintained. Our mission is to achieve “best practice” in the prevention of violence.

Appendix 2

Possible Internal Violence Prevention Policy

It is the policy of (named organisation) to provide a safe work environment. We:

- (a) recognise the potential for violence arising during work and undertake to do all that is reasonably practicable to eliminate or reduce the risks to everyone on-site;
- (b) will develop a violence prevention policy, strategies, and guidelines tailored to this worksite and work process in consultation with the OHS committee;
- (c) undertake to assess the potential for violence associated with the worksite and work processes, to identify groups of workers especially at risk, take all practical steps to eliminate/reduce the risks, and to provide adequate budgetary resources;
- (d) undertake to conduct regular occupational violence audits/risk assessments;
- (e) require full reporting of all violent incidents, including threatening behaviours, abuse, harassment, and intimidation;
- (f) will take seriously, and investigate, all reports from employees about the potential for occupational violence;
- (g) will investigate all incidents through the tripartite OHS committee;
- (h) agree that corporate response to all forms of violence will be consistent with the zero-tolerance policy and without favour. The policy *requires* disciplinary action after each proven incident, and discharge after significant aggressive behaviour;
- (i) agree that the CEO, all managers/supervisors, and the OHS committee are responsible for implementing and maintaining the violence prevention program;
- (j) will identify/name the contact person responsible for the implementation of the violence prevention policy and strategies;
- (k) require contractors on-site to abide by the violence prevention policy, and to adopt comparable security procedures *as part of normal contract conditions*;
- (l) will, in consultation with the OHS committee and employee representatives, provide full training and regular re-training to workers who may be at risk of violence to enable them to recognise potentially violent persons or situations;
- (m) affirm that employees are instructed not to take risks on behalf of the employer to protect the employer's property;
- (n) will provide support and care, including counselling and professional care where appropriate, to those who have experienced violence;
- (o) will agree to move the perpetrator rather than the recipient of violence if possible;
- (p) will agree to a change of duties/location for a person who is unable to perform their former duties as a result of violence, without prejudice to future prospects;
- (q) will regularly monitor and evaluate the violence prevention policy and strategies in consultation with the OHS committee and employee representatives. Consultation will also occur prior to the design of any new worksite, change in work methods or site refurbishment;
- (r) will address the special risks for those working alone and after hours; and
- (s) will adopt legal counsel recommendations.

Date:..... signed by CEO:..... Policy last updated:.....

(Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union (MSFU) 1994, 1995, cited in Chappell and Di Martino 1998, p. 98; Davis 1997, p. 175; Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996, p. 33)

Appendix 3

| Possible Legal Vulnerability Checklist | <i>yes</i> | <i>no</i> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • This organisation has a mission statement that defines internal violence and prohibits all such behaviours | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • This organisation has a violence prevention policy that sets out inappropriate behaviours, strategies implemented in the organisation to eliminate/reduce violence, mechanisms to involve the workforce in violence prevention planning and implementation of risk control strategies, and post-incident supports | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • All personnel have been made aware of the violence prevention policy through induction procedures, an information campaign, and on-going monitoring by the occupational health and safety committee | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • The violence prevention policy is enforced at all levels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • As new information becomes available the policy and strategy will be updated | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (adapted from Davis 1997, pp. 174–76) | | |

Appendix 4

Possible CEO Statement of Commitment to Zero-tolerance of Violence

This organisation takes seriously our duty of care obligations and will work constructively with all members of the workforce to encourage a participatory management style, foster teamwork, improve employer/employee communication, and adopt an “open door” policy to eliminate all instances of violence.

We have assigned specific responsibility for violence prevention to *(insert name)* who has the authority and responsibility for implementing the strategy, and for conducting regular occupational violence audits on-site. Nonetheless, under the regulatory framework in the Australian state of *(insert name)* this organisation recognises that primary responsibility for occupational health and safety—of which violence prevention is a part—rests with the employer/CEO. All workers are responsible for following the violence prevention policy, observing all directives, and for assisting in maintaining a workplace that is free from threats, harassment, intimidation, or physical violence. All incidents of occupational violence will be investigated and are subject to disciplinary proceedings, including discharge.

(California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (CAL/OSHA) 1994, p. 3)

Appendix 5

Possible Communication Strategy for Internal Violence Prevention

This organisation will:

- communicate the violence prevention policy to all supervisors and workers through bulletin board notices, with all employment contracts, in staff newsletters and through other appropriate means, for example changes notified with pay advice slips;
- distribute violence prevention information through the OHS committee;
- include the zero-tolerance violence policy and strategies in new worker orientations;
- regularly re-train all “at risk” staff in violence prevention;
- periodically review the violence prevention policy and strategies;
- ensure that violence prevention is on the agenda of each meeting of the OHS safety committee;
- restrict access to the worksite by past and recently discharged workers and supervisors;
- instigate and maintain a reporting system by which recipients of violence can remain anonymous to protect them from fear of perpetrator or threats of retribution (while retaining natural justice provisions for alleged perpetrators); and
- conduct post-incident support and counselling procedures in a manner which maintains personal confidentiality, and without prejudice.

(CAL/OSHA 1994, pp. 3, 7)

Appendix 6

Possible Occupational Violence Audit/Risk Assessment Form

On *(insert date)* an on-site violence audit was carried out.

The audit was conducted by:.....

Employer representative:

Employee representative:

OHS committee representative:

Records reviewed:

Incident reports since last audit:

“Near miss/near assault” reports:

Insurance reports:

Police reports:.....

Grievances/mediations:

Training records:

Other relevant records:

From these records, we have identified the following issues that need to be addressed:

.....
.....

“Walk-through” audit:

Security/building access:

Reception:

Working alone/isolated:.....

Shiftwork/atypical hours:

Review of tasks and workloads:

From the “walk-through” violence audit, we have identified that the following issues need to be addressed:

.....

Semi-structured interviews with (anonymous) staff members:

Number of interviews conducted:

Areas of worksite/work process covered (only if does not identify individuals):.....

.....

Gender/ethnicity/youth breakdown of interviews:

Employment issues related to increased anxiety/stress:

From the interviews with staff, we have identified that the following issues need to be addressed:.....

.....

Overall risk controls recommended:

Engineering/security controls:

Work area, work process and workload:

Staff:

Hours:

Training:

Possible perpetrators for early mediation or additional training:.....

.....

Other risk controls recommended (resources required, proposed implementation date, and evaluation due date):

.....

(Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996)

Appendix 7

Possible Checklist: Warning Signs of Impending Internal Violence

| <i>Does the alleged perpetrator:</i> | <i>yes</i> | <i>no</i> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • show evidence of poor self-esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • refuse to cooperate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • regularly engage in arguments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • complain regularly about working conditions and job description | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have a work history showing many changes in employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • demonstrate “cries for help” in some way | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • indicate a heightened level of stress from work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • originate and spread lies about others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • swear excessively and/or use sexually explicit language | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • threaten or verbally abuse co-workers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have noticeable mood swings and/or unprovoked outbursts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • tend to be solitary with few social contacts/unstable family life | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • sexually harass staff | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • exhibit decreased or inconsistent productivity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • cause anxiety or unrest through aggressive behaviour | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have an unexplained increase in absenteeism | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • argue frequently and intensely | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • blatantly disregard organisational policies and procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • throw, sabotage, or steal equipment or property | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • set traps for others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • make strange or exotic claims (losing touch with reality) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have a fascination with weapons and/or military hardware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have a history of violence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • make verbal threats to hurt co-workers or supervisors | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have a substance abuse problem | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • send violent or sexual comments via email, voicemail, or letter | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • blame others for all difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • tell other workers about their plans to initiate violence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • destroy property | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • have physical confrontations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • display and/or use weapons | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • commit sexual assaults or arson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • does the employee talk about self-harm or suicide? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Date:..... Incident/person: Signature:

(See USOPM 1998, pp. 17, 46; Davis 1997, pp. 11, 14, 21, 30, 54; Randall 1997, pp. 53–54; Heskett 1996, p. 445; Kinney 1996, p. 307; Editor 1995, p. 29; Witkowski 1995, p. 216; Seger 1993, p. 141)

Appendix 8

Possible Internal Violent Incident Report Form

Instructions:

All incidents must be reported as soon as possible, and not later than 3 days.

A separate incident form is to be completed for each event.

Incidents of abuse, verbal threat, or aggressive behaviour where no actual harm has occurred should be recorded as the pattern may indicate the need for strategies to prevent future tragedies.

Type of incident: bullying abuse threats assaults robbery

Mechanism used: face-to-face phone email letter other

Name of recipient:

Position (job task):

Name of perpetrator (if known):

Position/job task (if known):

Any known relationship between recipient/perpetrator (for example, supervisor/employee):

Time of occurrence: a.m. p.m.

Day of week: Sun. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.

Location/area where incident took place:

Activity underway at time of incident:

Other persons present at time:

Nature of injuries sustained:

 Body part injured (for example, arm/head):

 Type of injury (for example, laceration/emotional):

How the incident arose and progressed (narrative data):

.....
.....

Contributing causes:

.....

Total lost time: Recipient: hours: minutes:

 Perpetrator: hours: minutes:

 Investigator: hours: minutes:

Costs: Lost time: Equipment/building damage: Other:

 Estimated total costs:

Outcomes of incident (for example, treatment/disciplinary action):

.....
.....
.....

Date: Signature: (form last updated:).

(Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996)

Appendix 9

Possible Record/File Kept By Recipient of Internal Violence

1. *Written record/diary of all incidents, threats, or physical attacks:*
 - each incident should be recorded separately;
 - date, time, place;
 - details of what happened; and
 - name(s) of witnesses.
2. *Correspondence to perpetrator following any incidents:*
 - all correspondence must be retained;
 - statement(s) made by recipient to deny or correct remarks, statements or claims by perpetrator;
 - date all statement(s) and enter the dates mailed/delivered to perpetrator;
 - note if there has been a reply from perpetrator (attach to record and date); and
 - if there is no reply from perpetrator, this should be recorded.
3. *Correspondence from perpetrator following any incidents:*
 - all correspondence must be retained;
 - statement(s) made by perpetrator to deny or correct remarks, statements or claims by recipient; and
 - date all statement(s) and enter the dates mailed/delivered to recipient.
4. *Correspondence and meetings with union delegate/officials:*
 - confidential meeting(s) with Union delegate/official (date, names of those present, items discussed); copies of any notes taken during these verbal discussions should be attached to the file;
 - written correspondence with Union delegate/official (date and file correspondence/photocopies); and
 - copies of correspondence forwarded by Union delegate/official on behalf of recipient filed.
5. *HRM, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), or counsellors approached:*
 - records should be kept of dates, items discussed, names of those (a) contacted and (b) present at meetings, and (c) copies of any written notes should be attached to the file.
6. *Discussion with colleagues:*
 - if there is more than one recipient, a group complaint may be appropriate.
7. *Guidance:* always stick with the facts and avoid statements that could be interpreted as ill-feeling or personality conflicts.
8. *Possible action by union delegates/officials:*
 - conducting an anonymous survey of member's experiences; developing a file on bullying incidents on this site and actions taken; holding a special union meeting to discuss violence; and encouraging delegates to become well-informed/trained in violence prevention; and
 - embarking on negotiations with the employer for an anti-violence policy and strategies to be implemented.

(developed from UNISON 1996)

Appendix 10

Possible Anonymous Internal Violence Survey of Staff

The OHS committee requested this anonymous survey of staff to identify occupational violence risks and potentially useful prevention methods. A person independent of the organisation undertook the survey, and only grouped data was returned to the company. Date:.....

1. Violence policies and strategies:

Does your organisation have an internal violence prevention policy? yes no don't know

The violence policy here is:

excellent fairly good okay not very good terrible

Does your organisation have an internal violence strategy? yes no don't know

The violence strategy is:

excellent fairly good okay not very good terrible

Does the organisation hold regular meetings so everyone can discuss violence openly? yes no don't know

Is there a violence contact person? yes no don't know

Are there formal complaint/grievance procedures? yes no don't know

2. The violence prevention program here is:

excellent fairly good okay not very good terrible

The violence prevention training was:

excellent fairly good okay not very good terrible/useless

Violence prevention training was provided to me: during induction only re-training (date):.....

at other organisation (name):..... (date):..... other (date):.....

3. Occupational violence experiences:

Do you know what to do if you are having trouble with someone at work? yes no not sure

At work, have you experienced: bullying abuse threats assaults robbery

Number of incidents in past 12 months (specify type):

If yes, did this violent incident come from:

staff member(s) client/customer stranger/robbery other

Please describe:

If yes, did you report this to anyone here:

yes, on the report form yes, but informally no (please explain why not)

Have you missed work in the last 12 months because of something that happened here? yes no

If yes, please describe:

To your knowledge, has there been any violence between workers here? yes no don't know

4. Action taken by organisation post-incident:

investigated and made changes to fix situation investigated and made no changes
 made life difficult for me did not report incident other

5. Recommended changes:

(Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996.

See alternative possible survey in Vandenbos and Bulatao 1996, p. 285)

Appendix 11

Possible Internal Violence Security Measures Checklist

In this organisation the security system has been designed with prevention in mind, while retaining the ability to react quickly to an emergency.

Prevention:

- Restrictive access devices have been provided to all staff, for example card keys with photo identification.
- There is a requirement for visitors/ex employee visitors to wear short-term access badges on-site. These are provided at reception.
- Physical barriers prevent access to working areas without card keys.
- Additional security procedures are implemented for staff working late or unusual hours, travelling for work or in the field, and for those performing high-risk tasks (for example, disciplinary terminations).
- Workers/supervisors who have previously been cautioned about inappropriate behaviour are reviewed regularly.
- Access of ex-employees is restricted, especially those who have been discharged because of violence. In rare cases, restraining orders will be obtained.
- All staff are required to report suspicious, violent or unusual behaviour to security.
- There is improved lighting in car parks, and CCTV where appropriate.
- All weapons (including knives) are banned from this worksite.

Emergency/crisis response plan:

- On every phone is a sticker that states "in the event of an emergency, contact reception/security on (insert number)".
- An emergency alarm button is installed at reception.
- An emergency/crisis response plan is in place.
- The emergency/crisis team meets regularly in conjunction with the OHS committee.
- The emergency/crisis team members have been trained in early threat recognition, and have liaised with relevant outside authorities.
- All personnel are aware of the emergency/crisis team.
- The emergency/crisis response plan includes: post-incident control of the immediate working environment; provision of information to law enforcement agencies; guidelines for provision of media statements; post-incident investigation and analysis; and confidential debriefing of staff.

form last updated:

(See USOPM 1998, p. 22; Kinney 1996, p. 309; Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996, p. 60)

Appendix 12

Possible Security Plan Audit Form

On *(insert date)* a security plan evaluation was carried out.

The security plan audit was conducted by:

Employer representative:

Employee representative:

OHS committee representative:

Security staff representative:

Does the Security control plan include:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| mission statement | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| policy statement | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| violence incident report form | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| violence audit checklist | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| emergency/crisis plan | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |

Methods of control:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| reception/access control | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| emergency response plans | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| reporting procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| work processes | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| training program | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| computer/records security | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| after hours security | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| vulnerable employee protection | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |

Reviews undertaken by OHS committee:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| past incidents by type | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| past incidents by area | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| past incidents by gender | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| past incidents by position | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |
| anonymous survey of staff | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but inadequate |

Plan last reviewed, evaluated, and updated on:..... (date)

form last updated:

(adapted from Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996, p. 60)

Appendix 13

Possible Internal Violence Prevention Training Course Components

In this organisation:

- all workers and supervisors have induction training that includes violence prevention; and
- regular re-training is provided to “at-risk” staff .

Training components include:

- a definition of occupational violence;
- an explanation of the violence prevention policy and strategies in place;
- CEO commitment and responsibilities;
- employee responsibilities;
- OHS legal requirements;
- the name of the violence contact officer;
- typical internal violent behaviours and their impacts;
- mechanisms to report an incident;
- the aim of regular occupational violence audits;
- the process of risk identification, risk assessment, and risk control;
- risk factors, including those specific to this organisation;
- verbal and body language warning signs;
- conflict and dispute resolution skills, and ways to help diffuse hostile situations;
- security and emergency response plans; and
- EAP contacts and post-incident supports.

(see USOPM 1998, pp. 19–22) date course last updated:

Appendix 14

Resource Needs for an Internal Violence Prevention Training Program

Aim: to ensure supervisors and employees can define the range of violent behaviours, are aware of the internal violence prevention policy and strategies, understand the occupational violence audit process, and are aware of legal responsibilities.

Objectives: at the end of the program employees will be able to explain their duties, identify inappropriate coercive behaviours, understand impacts on recipients, complete an incident report, conduct an occupational violence audit, complete violence checklists, and recommend preventive actions.

Time required: 1.5 hours.

Target groups: all supervisors and all employees.

Resources:

- Whiteboard;
- pens and paper;
- handouts on typical bullying behaviours, organisation violence prevention policy and strategies, checklists;
- photocopies of recent legal case outcomes; and
- overview of OHS legislative framework for specific state.

Environment: large room with breakout space for small group role plays/discussions.

Timetable:

| | |
|---|--------------|
| introduction | (10 minutes) |
| definition of occupational violence and bullying | (10 minutes) |
| employer/CEO duty of care | (10 minutes) |
| violence prevention policy | (10 minutes) |
| violence prevention strategies | (20 minutes) |
| occupational violence audits/risk assessment checklists | (10 minutes) |
| break-out role plays | (20 minutes) |

(adapted from Cardy 1992, p. 168)

Appendix 15

Possible Internal Violence Prevention Policy And Strategy Evaluation Checklist

In this organisation:

- All supervisors and OHS committee members are trained in violence prevention and recording procedures.
- Violent incidents are tracked over time, and analysed by severity, work section, workload and workforce characteristics, for example gender, age, position in hierarchy, and job security.
- An anonymous survey of staff is conducted at least once a year to identify non-reported violence issues.
- All contractors and outsourced staff who come on-site are required to fully comply with the organisational policy and strategies.
- The pattern of violent incidents is reviewed by the tripartite OHS committee.
- The risk control strategies are formally evaluated. Critical questions asked include: (a) do the strategies implemented successfully control the identified risk factors and situations? (b) What is the cost of internal violence (including diminished productivity estimates)? (c) Have new/additional preventive measures been evaluated?
- This evaluation process is documented, and grouped data is provided to all staff.
- The violence data are included in annual reviews of supervisor and staff performance.
- Shortcomings in training and re-training are identified.

date most recent evaluation completed:..... date of previous evaluation:.....

(Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention 1996)