Workplace Violence Prevention Program

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The University of Victoria is committed to providing a safe environment for all members of the university community. Although workplace violence on campus is not common, the potential for violence can exist in certain jobs or work environments including when employees interact with the public, handle money in retails settings or work outside of regular hours. We are committed to preventing workplace violence and to respond appropriately if threats or acts of violence do occur.

WorkSafeBC requires employers to develop a violence prevention program to minimize the risk to employees of encountering violence. This document provides information, education, procedures and resources for all UVic employees, as well as a risk assessment tool for departments to develop unit-specific procedures where a risk of violence has been identified due to the nature of the work or workplace.

I.   Policy on Prevention of Violence in the Workplace

The university is committed to establishing and maintaining a Violence Prevention Program as outlined in Policy SS9120 - Prevention of Violence in the Workplace, and in compliance with WorkSafeBC.

Policy SS9120 conveys the university's commitment to the prevention of violence in the workplace and describes the responsibilities and accountabilities of all members of the university community.

II.   What is Workplace Violence?

The WSBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) defines violence *as "the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury".*

Note that acts of violence or threats by a worker towards another worker are covered under Workplace Conduct provisions of the OHSR (4.25).

III.   Risk Assessment

A written risk assessment must be conducted, and reviewed annually, where the experience in the workplace—or in workplaces similarly organized or situated—indicates the potential for incidents of violence against employees.

Where might violence occur? The following are examples of work that may present a risk of violence:

- Interacting with members of the public
- Customer service, security and healthcare jobs
- Working with cash
- Late night work or travel
- Working alone

In such circumstances, a risk assessment must include the consideration of:

- actual incidents of violence in the workplace (past 3-5 years),
- occupational experience in similar workplaces, and
- the location and circumstances in which work will take place

The risk assessment may also include the consideration of:

- layout and condition of the workplace, including furniture placement, the existence of barriers between workers and the public, lighting, and methods of access and egress;
- types of equipment, tools, utensils, etc. that are used or available;
- extent and nature of contact with persons and their behaviour, including the use of alcohol and drugs by them;
- age, gender, experience, skills and training of the workers concerned;
- existing work procedures, for example, when interacting with the public or in having to enforce the employer's rules or policies with regard to the public;
- existing violence prevention initiatives or programs;
- communication methods by which, for example, information about risks, incidents or threats of violence or requests for assistance may be sent;
- existence of clearly marked exit signs and emergency procedures; and
- staff deployment and scheduling, including the extent to which persons work at night, work alone, are checked when working alone and the availability of backup assistance.

Review and complete the [risk assessment tool](#) to identify appropriate control measures for your workplace.

IV.   Control Measures to Eliminate or Reduce the Risk of Violence

UVic departments are required to implement control measures to eliminate or minimize the risk of injury for employees where a risk assessment has identified a potential for workplace violence. The measures will typically involve a combination of engineering or administrative controls and will focus on enhancing communication systems and supervision.

Supervisors, in consultation with employees, will need to evaluate their unique work activities and environments to determine which controls should be selected. Some examples are provided below.

Engineering controls
The physical arrangement, design or alteration of workstations, equipment, materials, production facilities or other aspects of the physical work environment:

- Workstation/area redesign (e.g. line-of-sight and access/egress improvements)
- Communication systems (e.g. cell phones, 2-way radios, intercoms)
- Location systems (e.g. closed-circuit cameras)
- Alarms or personal emergency call devices

Administrative controls
The provision, use and scheduling of work activities and resources in the workplace, including planning, organizing, staffing and coordinating:

- Establish a regular, repeating check-in procedure to ensure the well-being of the worker is known
- Schedule moderately hazardous work during regular business hours so that other people are more likely to be in the vicinity
- Implement a "buddy system" for certain activities where workers are more isolated
- Restrict the amount of time new or inexperienced workers are permitted to work alone
- Increase the frequency of direct supervision for new or inexperienced workers.

Once control measures are implemented it is essential that supervisors educate and train their employees, ensure that communication and check-in procedures are effective, and review all procedures annually in consultation with employees.

V.   Worker and Supervisor Training

The UVic Health and Safety Orientation course completion, which is required of all employees and supervisors, provides an overview of violence prevention policies and resources, incident reporting procedures, and the rights and responsibilities of employees and supervisors at UVic.

In addition, supervisors are required to orient and train their employees on any unit-specific violence prevention procedures implemented from a risk assessment.

VI.   How to Report Incidents of Workplace Violence

Reporting emergencies
Threats of violence, assaults or other violent behaviours that require an immediate response should be reported to both the police and Campus Security Services.

Police: 911 or 9-911
UVic Campus Security Services: 250-721-7599

Callers should provide critical information including their location, the nature of the incident, whether perpetrator(s) are still present, etc.

Reporting non-emergencies
Threatening statements or behaviour that gives one reasonable grounds to believe that there is a potential for workplace violence must also be reported. Such reports may assist in identifying patterns of potential violence and may assist in the prevention of emergency situations in the future.

All such circumstances must be reported to your supervisor and Campus Security Services (250-721-7599).

VII.   Incident Investigations

All reports of incidents or potential incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately. The nature of the investigation will depend largely on the circumstances and may involve Campus Security Services, Human Resources, OHSE, EQHR, the department involved, union representatives and/or external law enforcement agencies. The investigation may result in the matter being dealt with under the provisions of relevant collective agreement(s), University policies, and/or legislation such as the Criminal Code.

In instances where a WorkSafeBC claim has been filed, a preliminary joint investigation must be completed within 48 hours and a full joint investigation within 30 days.

VIII.   Campus Resources

Campus Security Services offers several programs to aid in protecting the safety of University community members, including:
- Safehaven
- SafeWalk
- Campus Alone

For more information on how to protect yourself and your employees please visit the Campus Security website or call 250-721-8981 to speak with one of their personal safety coordinators.

Employee Family Assistant Program and Counselling Services
Victims of threatening behaviour or acts of violence who wish to receive counselling support may do so through either EFAP (faculty/staff) or through Counselling Services for students.

Occupational Health, Safety & Environment
OHSE is available to provide advice about WorkSafeBC requirements for violence prevention, and will refer managers/supervisors to Campus Security for assistance when appropriate.

IX.   Related UVic Policies:

SS9120 – Policy on Prevention of Violence in the Workplace

SS9125 – Response to At-Risk Behaviour Policy

GV0205 – Discrimination and Harassment Policy

GV0245 – Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy

SS9115 – Critical Incident Response Procedures

SS9200 – Environmental Health and Safety Policy

Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Tool

This tool is intended for units that are required to conduct a risk assessment where the experience in their workplace, or in similar workplaces, indicates that the potential for violence exists. The risk assessment should identify the types of risks that apply to your work areas and the appropriate control measures to implement in order to minimize risks.

Risk Assessment Steps:

1. Review WorkSafeBC definitions of workplace violence (OHSR 4.27) and workplace conduct (OHSR 4.24);

2. Review related UVic policies and procedures related to personal safety;

3. Review reports of past violence, threats, or near-miss situations related to workplace violence. Consult with department head(s), Campus Security Services, OHSE or local safety committee co-Chairs;

4. Collect information from employees about past incidents, concerns and current violence prevention procedures;

5. Identify the specific risks in your workplace (Table 1);

6. Complete the Assessment and Control Measures (Table 2);

7. Review the risk assessment results with employees, and address any recommendations.

Date:	[Type here]
Department / Unit Name:	[Type here]
Worker Representative:	[Type here]
Management Representative:	[Type here]

Table 1 - Identify the risk(s) relevant to your workplace

☐	Working alone or in isolation
☐	Providing service directly to the public or to students
☐	Handling, securing and protecting cash and valuables
☐	Dealing with irate, unstable or volatile individuals, including those that may be impaired by drugs or alcohol
☐	Transporting people or materials
☐	Travelling to remote locations
☐	[Type here]
☐	[Type here]

Table 2 – Assessment and Control Measures

Physical/Environmental Measures & Procedures		Existing Controls	Recommended Controls/Action	Person Responsible	Date of Completion
Does the public have direct physical access to the workplace?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Workers have unobstructed entrances and exits ☐ The entrances and public areas of the workplace have good lighting that allow staff to see the activities of the public ☐ Workers are easily visible in the work area and readily observed by the public or co-workers ☐ Well-designed counters and/or barriers prevent physical access to non-public areas ☐ Employee-only area can be locked to prevent public access	[Type here] [Type here]	[Type here] [Type here]	[Type here] [Type here]

		☐ Are there objects or equipment on the counter that could be used against employees? ☐ Employees can see the entire work area without cameras or mirrors ☐ There are written procedures and training for shoplifting or attempted robbery			
Can workers call for immediate help when required?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Written procedures and training are in place for asking for help ☐ Workers have access to a telephone to call for help ☐ Emergency numbers are posted on all phones	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]
Do workers work at times of increased vulnerability such as late at night or early morning?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Written procedures and worker training are in place for opening and closing, including if working alone	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]
Are there regular timed contacts with workers when they are working alone or in isolation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Communications or monitoring devices are provided ☐ Regular contact times or check-in locations are in place ☐ Designated person to monitor contact with workers and to follow up if contact lost	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]
Are there procedures in place to identify high-risk individuals, situations or locations and how to respond	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Departmental procedures and job-specific training account for the possibility of dealing with an irate client ☐ These procedures are documented and affected staff training is also documented ☐ Violence prevention procedures are reviewed annually with worker or when duties are new	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]

to upset, aggressive or violent people?		☐ A risk assessment is reviewed whenever there is a violent incident			
Cash or Valuables	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Cash transaction area is secured from attempted "grab and go" ☐ Cash or valuables are handled in a private secure location away from public areas ☐ Minimal amounts of cash and valuables are kept on hand ☐ Large bills are put in a drop box, safe or secure room that is out of sight ☐ Cash deposits or transfers are done securely and following written procedures	[Type here] [Type here]	[Type here] [Type here]	[Type here] [Type here]
Transporting people or materials	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Do passengers have physical access to drivers? ☐ Can workers summon immediate help when required? ☐ Are vehicles regularly inspected to ensure they are in good condition?	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]
Travelling to Remote Locations	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	☐ Consult UVic Field Safety webpage ☐ Field safety plan and all necessary approvals are in place	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]
[Type here]	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]
[Type here]	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]	[Type here]