

Violence and Harassment in the Workplace – Working Late Fact Sheet



WHY IS WORKING LATE A PROBLEM?

While it is not always hazardous to work late or outside of regular business hours, it can mean you are working alone and that you are traveling to or from work after dark. Areas that are busy with activity and considered very safe during daylight hours can take on an entirely different feel when the workday ends or after dark. Whether a situation is a high or low risk will depend on your location, the type of work you do, whether or not you interact with the public, and the consequences of an emergency, accident, injury, etc. This wide variety of circumstances makes it important to assess each situation individually.

WHAT CAN I DO TO KEEP SAFE WHEN I AM WORKING LATE?

- Follow your workplace's procedures for working alone or after hours.
- Always let a co-worker, friend, family member or security guard know you are working late and when you expect to leave.
- Keep your cell phone available or know where emergency phones are located.
- Use the "buddy system". Arrange to work late on the same night as a friend or colleague.
- Plan ahead and think about which areas are safe where you can retreat to and call for help.
- Before it is dark outside, move your car to a well-lit area that is close to your building or a parking lot attendant.
- Before your co-workers leave, check that all the doors and windows are locked and make sure nobody is in the washrooms and storage rooms.
- If you enter an area and suspect that someone else might be inside who you do not trust, do not call out. Back out quietly and go to a safe area with a lockable door. Call for help.
- If you encounter someone you don't know, indicate that you are not alone. Say "my supervisor will be right here and will be able to help you".
- If you suspect someone is lurking outside, call the police or security officers.
- Know where you are so you can give these details about your location if you need to call for help.
- Where possible, call another person and stay on the phone until you get you to your car. However, remain alert to your surroundings at the same time. Ask your employer to consider providing safer ways to reach parking areas after hours. Consider designating parking spots that are close to the building and well lit for those who work after hours.

- Be aware of the services offered by your local transit company for after-hours commuters (e.g., they may have a “request stop” service that allows commuters to get off anywhere along the route after dark, rather than at a designated stop).
- Learn the warning signs that a person is becoming agitated and how to deal with negative interactions.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO TO KEEP WORKERS SAFE WHILE THEY ARE WORKING LATE?

- Develop procedures and provide training on how to stay safe while working late.
- Whenever possible, make sure workers are not working alone.
- Designate a contact person to check on workers at scheduled intervals.
- Establish check-in procedures.
- Provide a safe area (that is lockable) that workers can easily and quickly enter in an emergency.
- Make sure the workplace is brightly lit, including any outside areas such as parking lots or gas pumps.
- Make sure the workplace has good visibility and clear sightlines to entrances and exits as well as any outside areas. Make sure windows, doors and exits are not blocked by signs or objects.
- To protect workers, consider providing convex safety mirrors so workers can see more of the workplace, bullet-resistant enclosures, alarm systems, panic buttons, global positioning systems (GPS), and radios (also known as an “open mike switch”).
- Whenever possible, reduce risk factors such as working with money or other valuables.
- Post signs alerting the public that the premise has very little cash on hand.
- Establish safe cash-handling procedures and consider installing drop safes where larger amounts of cash may be acquired throughout the night.
- Provide education and training to all workers that is appropriate to the hazards and risks they may experience.

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