

# Health and Safety

## Bulletin

### Violence at work

#### Articles in this newsletter:

- Violence at work
- HSE's Metalworking fluid campaign continues
- Case Law update – violence and aggression
- HSE stress indicator tool evolving

#### Useful contacts:

HSE website  
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In a recent global poll carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) of 125,000 people across 121 countries, 21% of respondents stated they had experienced some sort of violence or harassment at work. Statistics focusing on GB reflect these findings: -

- Over 5600 of the non-fatal injuries reported under RIDDOR categorised as violence in the workplace in 2020. 43% of assaults were carried out on those in health and social care by people who were or were perceived to be drunk and 42% by those who were or were perceived to be on drugs
- Injuries resulting from a violence at work incident in England and Wales in 2019/20 resulted in severe bruising, scratches, cuts and puncture/stab wounds

Workers most at risk of violence and aggression are those that come into direct contact with members of the public (including remote contact such as call centre staff), anyone whose role includes handling cash, or those who's work is associated with enforcement.

#### How is violence at work categorised?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.' It includes verbal abuse or physical attacks, but it must be work-related – from a member of the public, customer or service user. It does not include violence or aggression between workers.

There is no specific legislation about violence at work – the standards are set by the general employer duties under the Health and safety at Work etc Act "to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of workers at work," and the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to assess and manage the health and safety risk to workers.

#### Risk factors and controls

Commonly, the risk factors and controls associated with work-related violence and aggression are split into three categories: -

- Workplace – good layout and lighting within the workspace improves visibility and removes blind spots. It can also help in areas where tension is likely to increase, such as providing a queueing system and entertainment (a TV) while people wait. It may also include deterrents such as CCTV and signage warning of the consequences to the perpetrator of any incident
- Job design – this may involve providing specific appointment times, or where delays are likely, providing up to date information about how long they are likely to be
- Training – employee training should include awareness of warning signs (such as body language), communication skills to try and diffuse the situation (such as maintaining a relaxed posture, being polite and using a calm voice). It should also include emergency procedures, such as how to raise the alarm, and details on how to report incidents

The HSE has issued a number of free leaflets providing guidance to different work environments, such as INDG423 Managing work-related violence in licensed and retail premises and HSG133 Preventing violence to retail staff.

Some incidents that result in injury may be reportable to the enforcement authorities under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR). Some incidents should also be reported to the police.

It is important that organisations not only record but also investigate the incidents to identify any further prevention or mitigation controls to reduce risk. Unless workers perceive that action is being taken after an incident is reported, it is likely they will not report similar events in the future.

Some workers who suffer or witness work-related violence or aggression may need additional support, such as counselling or possibly a role change.

#### Conclusion

Unfortunately, being a victim of workplace violence and aggression is just seen as "part of the job" in certain working environments – the scale of it only becomes clear after a serious incident. Employers must proactively risk assess the situations in which violence and aggression might occur and take reasonably practicable action to prevent or mitigate it.

## Recently issued/revised health and safety information:

- HSE poster on common locations for asbestos [Industrial 'where asbestos hides' A3 poster: A3 poster \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
- HSE's webinar about the BIRD (Back Injury Risks During Driving) tool [Back Injury Risks in Driving \(BIRD\) Tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
- HSE's updated vibration webpages [Vibration - HSE](#)
- What might best practice look like for managing good sleep practice for night workers at work? [SOM Managing good sleep practice for night workers at work September 2022.pdf](#)
- HAS's High visibility clothing for use around moving vehicles information sheet [high visibility clothing for use around moving vehicles.pdf \(hsa.ie\)](#)
- HAS's safety alert on use of emery cloth [Safety alert - Safe use of emery cloth | Health and Safety Executive for](#)

## HSE's Metalworking fluid campaign continues

The HSE's metalworking fluids campaign has now been running for over two months and they have publicized where they are commonly finding compliance failures as: -

- Not having local exhaust ventilation
- Failure to complete regular fluid quality checks
- Failing to provide regular health checks for lung

and skin conditions  
The HSE has provided further guidance on the steps to increase compliance at [Machinists and metalworking fluid - Work Right to keep Britain safe](#).

They have also provided a metalworking fluids quiz accessible at [HSE metalworking fluids quiz \(involve.me\)](#), with the aim of encouraging employer's to evaluate their level of

knowledge on the topic. They have also provided a link to a webinar, which not only explains the requirements, but also uses a case study to explain how an employee was harmed following exposure to the fluids and the consequences for his employer at [Webinar: managing metalworking fluid hazards - Work Right to keep Britain safe](#).

## Case Law update

*This issue focuses on cases that involved workplace violence and aggression*

A private security company has been fined after an employee suffered life-changing injuries when he was assaulted by four individuals at a young offender's training facility. During an activity one of the individuals attempted to climb the fence and the employee attempted to deal with it alone. The situation became hostile and he was attacked by four people. He sustained multiple injuries to his head and body, suffered brain damage and had a plate fitted in his skull. He spent a further two months in a specialist brain injury rehabilitation centre. G4S Care and Justice

Services (UK) Ltd were fined **£250,000** with **£13,787** costs

Luton Borough Council was fined **£104,000** with **£60,000** costs after an assistant head teacher suffered life changing injuries. He was dealing with a disruptive pupil who was refusing to go into a detention room. The pupil launched a sustained assault on the teacher, using a mobile phone. It was found that the Council did not ensure that the school had people with sufficient competence in the management of health and safety involved in running the school to ensure that the threat was addressed and had not provided suitable training to staff

A newsagent was prosecuted after a worker was violently assaulted at one of its branches during a robbery. The member of staff had just opened the shop when the robbery occurred, during which the robber struck her in the face, fracturing an eye socket. The thief then stole £2,641 from the safe. The shop had been burgled one month earlier – during the investigation of that incident the police found the CCTV was not working and the panic alarm had been disconnected without the workers' knowledge. The newsagent was fined **£5,000** with **£5,505** costs

## HSE stress indicator tool evolving

The HSE created the Stress Indicator Tool (SIT) some time ago [Free Stress Indicator Tool \(hse.gov.uk\)](#) – it comprises question sets developed around the HSE's management standard, allowing organisations to measure their management of work-related health risks during an employee survey and supports analysis of the returned data. The tool is free for organisations employing fewer than 50 people, with a nominal charge for larger employers.

In recognition of the changes in the way we are working, and in recognition they are still evolving, the HSE in collaboration with the University of Hull has now added a Home and Hybrid Working (HHW) module (all organisations have to pay a nominal charge for this), which allows employers to gather information specifically about the mental health of those who are HHW. More information is available at [Stress Indicator Tool \(SIT\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

### About Clwyd Associates...

We are a management consultancy, focusing on health and safety, and SAP based in the Midlands.

We employ consultants with at least 15 years practical experience backed up by recognised professional and academic qualifications - ensuring our clients receive first class service.



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