

Student Handout

Violence and Harassment

Violent incidents can occur without warning. The incidents can be between a customer and a worker, between workers, or between a worker and the employer. Often the incidents take the form of verbal harassment, which may not have physical consequences, but can cause anxiety and depression for the worker. Serious violent incidents are rare, but can be severe – head injuries, gun shot or knife wounds, broken bones, or death.

Examples of hazards

- angry customers, particularly regarding money transactions
- co-workers
- criminals

Safety tips

- Make sure you're aware of people who are likely to come to your workplace (for example, customers or former co-workers) and who have threatened violence to workers in the past.
- Remain calm, and try to calm the other person.
- Avoid escalating the situation. Find ways to help an irate customer save face.
- Listen carefully and try to put yourself in the other person's shoes, so you can better understand how to solve the problem.
- If you cannot calm the person, ask for help.
- Do not resist if there is a threat of violence.
- Report harassment to your supervisor or employer, and violence (threats or actual) to the police.



Continued on page 2

Violence and harassment - page 2

If you are working alone:

- Have someone contact you periodically to ensure you're okay, in person, or by phone.
- Consider using a personal alarm.
- If possible, do not open doors and leave them open and unattended.
- If attacked, scream — as loud and long as possible — and run to a neighbouring business or residence or the nearest well-lit area and continue calling for help.
- If someone grabs your wallet/purse, tools, or other personal property, **do not** resist and **do not** chase the thief.
- Call the police immediately after any incident and record the appearance and mannerisms of the offender.

