

# Workplace Violence

## Preventing and Responding to Workplace Violence

### University Violence Prevention Statement

Dalhousie University operates in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations thereunder, including the Violence in the Workplace Regulations.

Physical violence in the workplace is a rare but serious occupational health and safety hazard that may cause physical and emotional harm. All members of the University are responsible for creating and maintaining a violence-free environment. The University views any acts of violence or threats of violence in the workplace as unacceptable. It is committed to minimizing and, to the extent possible, eliminating the risk of violence in the workplace, and to responding appropriately if workplace violence does occur.

### Application and Scope

This Policy applies to employees while engaged in an activity under the auspices of Dalhousie University.

This Policy outlines procedures for preventing, reporting, investigating and responding to violence or threats of violence in the workplace.

Dalhousie University has separate policies on sexual harassment and personal harassment, and complaints of this nature should be addressed in accordance with the provisions of Dalhousie University's "Sexual Harassment Policy" and "Personal Harassment Policy", respectively. Harassment based on any of the characteristics protected by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act is considered a form of discrimination and should be addressed in accordance with Dalhousie's "Statement on Prohibited Discrimination".

This Policy is administered by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety.

### Definitions

In this policy:

- **"Administrative Head"** means the Deans, Vice Presidents, and the President, as appropriate. An Administrative Head may delegate his or her authority and responsibilities under this Policy to those responsible for the units under the Administrative Head's control.
- **"employee"** means all University employees, individuals who hold a University academic appointment and individuals engaged to work on research projects.

- **“violence”** means any of the following:
  - threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviour that gives an employee reasonable cause to believe that the employee is at risk of physical injury,
  - conduct or attempted conduct of a person that endangers the physical health or physical safety of an employee;

Some examples of violence include shaking of fists, destroying property, throwing of objects, expression of intent to inflict harm, hitting and other acts of physical assault, robbery and arson.

**“workplace violence”** or **“violence in the workplace”** means any act of violence against an employee while the employee is engaged in an activity under the auspices of Dalhousie University.

## Policy & Procedures

### General

Administrative Heads must confirm with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to whom they delegate their authority and responsibilities under this Policy.

In carrying out their responsibilities under this Policy, Administrative Heads or designate may consult with the University Environmental Health and Safety Office, the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee, their Department or Divisional Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or safety representative, if one exists, employees within their authority and/or other appropriate University resource persons.

### Preventing Workplace Violence

#### Conducting a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment

Administrative Heads or designate must complete a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment to evaluate the risk of violence to employees within his or her authority. The Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Form, as may be amended from time to time, is attached to this Policy as Schedule A. When carrying out Workplace Violence Risk Assessments, Administrative Heads or designate should consider factors including, but not limited to:

- **Past incidents of violence:** within their workplace or similar workplaces, the nature of the violence, how it was addressed, the impacts of the violence;
- **The physical layout of the workplace,** for example: open work spaces, closed offices, counters or kiosks to provide service, separation of public versus private areas, proximity to other employees;
- **Workplace organization and practices,** for example: handling money and other valuables, dealing with people in distress, working hours, working alone during regular hours and after hours, access to phones;

- **Security procedures and practices**, for example: sign-in/out systems, PIN security access systems, notifying Security Services if working late, locking internal and external doors, door bells and peepholes in doors, use of Security Services/Tiger Patrol (phone 6400), use of alarm systems;
- **Location of the workplace within the University and larger community**, for example: buildings or workplaces that are isolated, buildings in downtown areas that may have a higher number of non-University visitors.

The Administrative Head or designate must conduct a new Workplace Violence Risk Assessment for each facility or activity for which they are responsible:

- at least every 5 years;
- where the Administrative Head or designate becomes aware of a type of violence occurring in similar workplaces that was not considered when the existing Workplace Violence Risk Assessments was conducted;
- when there is a significant change in any of the following:
  - the circumstances in which work takes place,
  - the interactions that occur in the course of performing work,
  - the physical location or layout of the workplace (ex: renovations or new construction); or
  - when the Administrative Head or designate is instructed to do so by the President of the University or designate.

Administrative Heads will retain one copy of completed Workplace Violence Risk Assessments. Copies must be provided to the University Environmental Health and Safety Office and the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee.

### **Preparing a Violence Prevention Plan**

Where the Workplace Violence Risk Assessment indicates that one or more significant risks of violence exists, the Administrative Head or designate must prepare a Violence Prevention Plan to address those significant risks. A sample Violence Prevention Plan, as may be amended from time to time, is attached as Schedule B.

As part of the Violence Prevention Plan, the Administrative Head or designate must:

- take and document reasonable measures to lessen, and where possible, eliminate the risk of violence; and
- provide training to employees who are exposed to a significant risk of violence regarding:
  - employee rights and responsibilities with respect to workplace violence;
  - the type of violence and the amount of risk they may encounter;
  - the steps taken to minimize or eliminate the risk of violence to the employee being trained;
  - recognizing potentially violent situations and how to respond to them; and
  - reporting, documenting and investigating incidents of violence.

Where a significant risk of violence is posed by an individual, the extent of personal information disclosed to an employee must be balanced against the privacy rights of the individual. This determination should be made in consultation with University Legal Counsel.

Administrative Heads or designate should ensure employees under their authority who are not exposed to a significant risk of violence, receive or have received general training regarding the following issues:

- employee rights and responsibilities with respect to workplace violence;
- recognizing potentially violent situations and how to respond to them; and
- reporting, documenting and investigating incidents of violence.

Training regarding all aspects of this Policy will be provided by Employee and Organizational Development (EOD). Requests for training can be made to EOD (494-8886, [EOD@dal.ca](mailto:EOD@dal.ca)). Administrative Heads will retain one copy of the completed Violence Prevention Plan. Copies must be provided to the University Environmental Health and Safety Office and the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee.

## **Reporting and Investigating Incidents of Workplace Violence**

### **General**

In general, employees are responsible for being familiar with:

- Emergency procedures;
- Evacuation routes in their workplaces; and
- The location and function of security systems in their workplaces.

### **Reporting emergencies**

Employees who witness threats of violence, assaults or other violent incidents that indicate an emergency must report this, as soon as it is safe to do so, to Security Services at **494-4109** and, as soon as possible thereafter, to their supervisor.

### **Reporting non-emergencies**

Non-managerial employees who witness threatening statements or behaviour that provide them with reasonable grounds to believe that there is the potential for workplace violence must report this immediately to their supervisor.

Employees in managerial roles who witness threatening statements or behaviour that provide them with reasonable grounds to believe that there is the potential for workplace violence must report this immediately to the Director of Security Services or designate, at **494-6400**.

Any person who receives a report of potential workplace violence will contact the Director of Security Services or designate, at 494-6400.

### **Investigation**

All reports of incidents or potential incidents of workplace violence will be investigated. The form of any investigation will depend largely on the circumstances and may involve Security Services, Human Resources, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety, employees and other individuals involved, and, as appropriate, external law enforcement agencies.

If an investigation discloses that an incident or potential incident of workplace violence occurred, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with applicable University rules and regulations or collective agreements/handbooks.

### **Support Services**

If an incident of workplace violence results in physical injury, emergency services will be made available. In cases where other support services may be necessary, including, but not limited to, treatment or counseling, the Administrative Head or designate will consult with Human Resources and the Environmental Health and Safety Office, as appropriate.

### **No Retaliation**

No person shall retaliate against another for bringing forward, in good faith, an incident or potential incident of workplace violence or for providing information in respect of an incident or potential incident of workplace violence. Retaliation will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with relevant University rules and regulations, or applicable collective agreements/handbooks.

### **Review**

This Policy will be reviewed within two years of receiving approval.

<b>Date Issued:</b> April 26, 2011
<b>Approved:</b> Ken Burt, Vice President (Finance and Administration)

## **Policy on Preventing and Responding to Workplace Violence**

### **A. University Violence Prevention Statement**

Dalhousie University operates in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations thereunder, including the *Violence in the Workplace Regulations*.

Physical violence in the workplace is a rare but serious occupational health and safety hazard that may cause physical and emotional harm. All members of the University are responsible for creating and maintaining a violence-free environment. The University views any acts of violence or threats of violence in the workplace as unacceptable. It is committed to minimizing and, to the extent possible, eliminating the risk of violence in the workplace, and to responding appropriately if workplace violence does occur.

### **B. Application and Scope**

This Policy applies to employees while engaged in an activity under the auspices of Dalhousie University.

This Policy outlines procedures for preventing, reporting, investigating and responding to violence or threats of violence in the workplace.

Dalhousie University has separate policies on sexual harassment and personal harassment, and complaints of this nature should be addressed in accordance with the provisions of Dalhousie University's "Sexual Harassment Policy" and "Personal Harassment Policy", respectively. Harassment based on any of the characteristics protected by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act is considered a form of discrimination and should be addressed in accordance with Dalhousie's "Statement on Prohibited Discrimination".

This Policy is administered by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety.

### **C. Definitions**

In this policy:

**“Administrative Head”** means the Deans, Vice Presidents, and the President, as appropriate. An Administrative Head may delegate his or her authority and responsibilities under this Policy to those responsible for the units under the Administrative Head’s control.

**“employee”** means all University employees, individuals who hold a University academic appointment and individuals engaged to work on research projects.

**“violence”** means any of the following:

- (a) threats, including a threatening statement or threatening behaviour that gives an employee reasonable cause to believe that the employee is at risk of physical injury,
- (b) conduct or attempted conduct of a person that endangers the physical health or physical safety of an employee;

Some examples of violence include shaking of fists, destroying property, throwing of objects, expression of intent to inflict harm, hitting and other acts of physical assault, robbery and arson.

**“workplace violence”** or **“violence in the workplace”** means any act of violence against an employee while the employee is engaged in an activity under the auspices of Dalhousie University.

## **D. Policy & Procedures**

### **General**

1. Administrative Heads must confirm with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to whom they delegate their authority and responsibilities under this Policy.
2. In carrying out their responsibilities under this Policy, Administrative Heads or designate may consult with the University Environmental Health and Safety Office, the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee, their Department or Divisional Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or safety representative, if one exists, employees within their authority and/or other appropriate University resource persons.

### **Preventing Workplace Violence**

#### Conducting a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment

3. Administrative Heads or designate must complete a Workplace Violence Risk Assessment to evaluate the risk of violence to employees within his or her authority. The Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Form, as may be amended from time to time, is attached to this Policy as Schedule A. When carrying out Workplace Violence Risk Assessments, Administrative Heads or designate should consider factors including, but not limited to:

*Past incidents of violence:* within their workplace or similar workplaces, the nature of the violence, how it was addressed, the impacts of the violence;

*The physical layout of the workplace*, for example: open work spaces, closed offices, counters or kiosks to provide service, separation of public versus private areas, proximity to other employees;

*Workplace organization and practices*, for example: handling money and other valuables, dealing with people in distress, working hours, working alone during regular hours and after hours, access to phones;

*Security procedures and practices*, for example: sign-in/out systems, PIN security access systems, notifying Security Services if working late, locking internal and external doors, door bells and peepholes in doors, use of Security Services/Tiger Patrol (phone 6400), use of alarm systems;

*Location of the workplace within the University and larger community*, for example: buildings or workplaces that are isolated, buildings in downtown areas that may have a higher number of non-University visitors.

4. The Administrative Head or designate must conduct a new Workplace Violence Risk Assessment for each facility or activity for which they are responsible:
  - (a) at least every 5 years;
  - (b) where the Administrative Head or designate becomes aware of a type of violence occurring in similar workplaces that was not considered when the existing Workplace Violence Risk Assessments was conducted;
  - (c) when there is a significant change in any of the following:
    - (i) the circumstances in which work takes place,
    - (ii) the interactions that occur in the course of performing work, the physical location or layout of the workplace (ex: renovations or new construction); or
    - (iii) when the Administrative Head or designate is instructed to do so by the President of the University or designate.
5. Administrative Heads will retain one copy of completed Workplace Violence Risk Assessments. Copies must be provided to the University Environmental Health and Safety Office and the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee.

#### Preparing a Violence Prevention Plan

6. Where the Workplace Violence Risk Assessment indicates that one or more significant risks of violence exists, the Administrative Head or designate must prepare a Violence Prevention Plan to address those significant risks. A sample Violence Prevention Plan, as may be amended from time to time, is attached as Schedule B.
7. As part of the Violence Prevention Plan, the Administrative Head or designate must:
  - (a) take and document reasonable measures to lessen, and where possible, eliminate the risk of violence; and

- (b) provide training to employees who are exposed to a significant risk of violence regarding:
  - (i) employee rights and responsibilities with respect to workplace violence;
  - (ii) the type of violence and the amount of risk they may encounter;
  - (iii) the steps taken to minimize or eliminate the risk of violence to the employee being trained;
  - (iv) recognizing potentially violent situations and how to respond to them; and
  - (v) reporting, documenting and investigating incidents of violence.

Where a significant risk of violence is posed by an individual, the extent of personal information disclosed to an employee must be balanced against the privacy rights of the individual. This determination should be made in consultation with University Legal Counsel.

- 8. Administrative Heads or designate should ensure employees under their authority who are not exposed to a significant risk of violence, receive or have received general training regarding the following issues:
  - (a) employee rights and responsibilities with respect to workplace violence;
  - (b) recognizing potentially violent situations and how to respond to them; and
  - (c) reporting, documenting and investigating incidents of violence.
- 9. Training regarding all aspects of this Policy will be provided by Employee and Organizational Development (EOD). Requests for training can be made to EOD (494-8886, [EOD@Dal.ca](mailto:EOD@Dal.ca)).
- 10. Administrative Heads will retain one copy of the completed Violence Prevention Plan. Copies must be provided to the University Environmental Health and Safety Office and the University Environmental Health and Safety Committee.

## **Reporting and Investigating Incidents of Workplace Violence**

### General

- 11. In general, employees are responsible for being familiar with:
  - (a) Emergency procedures, including those set out in the University's "Emergency Procedures Booklet": <http://environmentalhealthandsafetyoffice.dal.ca/files/emergbro.pdf>;
  - (b) Evacuation routes in their workplaces; and
  - (c) The location and function of security systems in their workplaces.

### Reporting emergencies

- 12. Employees who witness threats of violence, assaults or other violent incidents that indicate an emergency must report this, as soon as it is safe to do so, to Security Services at **494-4109** and, as soon as possible thereafter, to their supervisor.

### Reporting non-emergencies

13. Non-managerial employees who witness threatening statements or behaviour that provide them with reasonable grounds to believe that there is the potential for workplace violence must report this immediately to their supervisor.
14. Employees in managerial roles who witness threatening statements or behaviour that provide them with reasonable grounds to believe that there is the potential for workplace violence must report this immediately to the Director of Security Services or designate, at **494-6400**.
15. Any person who receives a report of potential workplace violence will contact the Director of Security Services or designate, at **494-6400**.

### Investigation

16. All reports of incidents or potential incidents of workplace violence will be investigated. The form of any investigation will depend largely on the circumstances and may involve Security Services, Human Resources, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety, employees and other individuals involved, and, as appropriate, external law enforcement agencies.
17. If an investigation discloses that an incident or potential incident of workplace violence occurred, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with applicable University rules and regulations or collective agreements/handbooks.

### **Support Services**

18. If an incident of workplace violence results in physical injury, emergency services will be made available. In cases where other support services may be necessary, including, but not limited to, treatment or counseling, the Administrative Head or designate will consult with Human Resources and the Environmental Health and Safety Office, as appropriate.

### **No Retaliation**

19. No person shall retaliate against another for bringing forward, in good faith, an incident or potential incident of workplace violence or for providing information in respect of an incident or potential incident of workplace violence. Retaliation will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in accordance with relevant University rules and regulations, or applicable collective agreements/handbooks.

### **Review**

20. This Policy will be reviewed within two years of receiving approval.

**Approved by Vice President (Finance and Administration), Ken Burt  
April 26, 2011**

Schedule "A"

# Workplace Violence Risk Assessment

## Dalhousie University

Organization/Department Name:

Assessment Date:

Name of Assessor(s):

**Describe the department/work area that you are assessing**

Number of employees:

Physical location:

Areas you are considering as the workplace for those employees who are your responsibility:

Describe the types of activities/functions performed by employees in the department:

Additional Details:

### **SECTION 1**

#### **Risk Identification**

Have you engaged your Health & Safety committee or member and/or considered bringing together a cross functional group to identify and assess the risks?  Yes  No  N/A (Please explain):

Have you used brainstorming techniques to identify the risks impacting your workgroup?  Yes  
 No

If you have answered "No" to any of these questions please re-consider performing these options.

Consider and answer the following when identifying the risks:

- a. Have there been any past violent incidents? This could range from employees having experienced physical violence to verbal abuse. (i.e. being shouted at, obscene language or phone calls, threats)
- Yes  No

If Yes, please list past violent incidents:

- b. Are you aware of violence that happens in workplaces similar to yours?
- Yes  No

If Yes, please provide examples:

- c. The conditions in which the work is done may increase the risk of employees encountering violence.

Please check all conditions that apply. Are there:

- Employees working alone before, during and/or after regular working hours? (Working alone is defined as when a person is working both out of sight and out of hearing of other employees)
- Employees working with money or other valuable items?
- Employees traveling for work to higher risk areas?
- Potential issues with the physical location of the workplace and its layout?
- Specific times when the risk could be higher; i.e.: evaluation, exams?
- Employees delivering or collecting items of value?
- Other, please explain:

Additional Details:



- d. The interactions that happen during work may increase the risk of employees encountering violence.

Please check all interactions that apply. Are employees:

- Dealing with people under the influence of drugs and alcohol?
- Dealing with people who are deeply troubled or distressed?
- Dealing with people in difficult and emotionally charged situations?
- Exercising control over others, or acting in a security function?
- Monitoring or regulating the activity of others or carrying out procedures/making decisions that adversely affect others?
- Involved in activities that may elicit a negative or confrontational response?
- Other, please explain:

Additional Details:



Describe each of the activities and/or features of the workplace that you believe may trigger violence and describe how frequently it happens:



## **SECTION 2**

### **Risk Assessment**

To properly perform the Risk Assessment, enter the position/positions at risk of workplace violence and specify the type of violence, for example: robbery, assault, etc. Then, examine the following charts and assess by selecting the appropriate option in the drop down boxes provided.

- the probability of the Violence Risk occurring
- the most serious, \*reasonably possible outcome (as opposed to the "most likely" outcome) for each violence risk and position

\*If the consequence has happened even once, it is reasonably possible

Position:  Violence Risk:  Risk Probability:  Risk Impact:

Category	Name	Characteristic
A	Frequent	Will likely happen often in next year
B	Likely	Will likely happen in next year
C	Occasional	Will likely happen sometime in next several years
D	Remote	Unlikely but even could be experienced in the next several years
E	Highly Unlikely	Event will not be experienced

Category	Name	Characteristic
4	Catastrophic	Fatality, coma
3	Critical	Severe injury - loss of, or use of limbs, hospitalization
2	Marginal	Minor injury - bruises, cuts
1	Negligible	No injury

Having estimated the probability and the possible outcome/impact of the violence risk, combine the two answers to determine where on the table below the violence risk in consideration falls.

Impact categories			
4 - Catastrophic	3 - Critical	2 - Marginal	1 - Negligible
4A	3A	2A	1A
4B	3B	2B	1B
4C	3C	2C	1C
4D	3D	2D	1D

## Interpretation of Risks

Pink - Significant and unacceptable risks. Address immediately through a violence prevention plan

White - Significant risks. Include in the violence prevention plan

Blue - These violence risks are not considered significant for the purposes of requiring a violence prevention plan. They should however, be addressed through regular health and safety measures

Yellow - These violence risks are not considered significant for the purposes of requiring a violence prevention plan. However, where feasible, you should attempt to eliminate or reduce the risk further.

## SECTION 3

### Risk Management

Risk management includes the things you are doing to mitigate the impact and reduce the probability that it will happen if it does.

What are you currently doing to manage the risks you identified? All of the significant risks identified and assessed (the pink and white ones) must be appropriately managed in order to comply with the Regulation. You must prepare and include in your report a violence prevention plan that covers each of the significant risks. A template to complete your plan is attached.

[Violence Prevention Plan Template](#)

Consider the following when preparing the violence prevention plan:

- Policies and procedures
- Clarity and effectiveness of emergency response
- Physical security measures panic buttons, layout, cameras
- Regular training sessions

The management activities should be monitored to ensure effectiveness. This assessment process should be repeated every five years unless a significant change creates new or increased risk in your area and before then and a copy of the final assessment report must be given to your Health & Safety committee or member.

Based on the responses given to the assessment, please answer the following:

Do you feel that all reasonable steps and precautions have been taken to prevent or to reduce the risk of violence occurring within the department/workplace?  Yes  No

What additional steps would you recommend or suggest?:

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and horizontal scrollbars at the bottom.

What type of assistance would be required to successfully accomplish the above steps?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and horizontal scrollbars at the bottom.

We thank you for your valuable input and time.

<input type="button" value="Send Info"/>	<input type="button" value="Reset"/>
--	--------------------------------------

## Schedule "B"

# Violence Prevention Plan Template

**Description of each position, the Violent Act at Risk of Occurring & Risk Rating:**

**Describe or list the current procedures in place to help minimize or eliminate the risk of violence within the Unit.**

**How are employees presently being informed of or trained in the current procedures in place to help minimize or eliminate the risk of violence?**

**How are incidents of violence currently being reported, documented, and investigated?**

**What actions will be taken to manage the risk?**

**Who is responsible for these actions and what is the timeline?**