

# Violence in the Workplace

While the Violence in the Workplace Regulations under the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act do not specifically apply to farms, all workplace parties must acknowledge their responsibility to recognize violence as an occupational health and safety hazard. While a farm operation is not required to follow the exact requirements listed below, it is a reasonable model to follow when assessing the risk of violence at the workplace.

## Violence Risk Assessment

An employer is responsible for conducting a risk assessment at their workplace to determine whether there is a risk of violence and prepare a written report detailing the extent and nature of any identified risk.

The following must be taken into consideration when performing a violence risk assessment:

- Violence that has occurred at the workplace in the past
- Violence that is known to occur in similar workplaces
- The circumstances at the workplace
- Interactions that occur while performing work
- Physical location and layout of the workplace

A new violence risk assessment must be done **every 5 years or when:**

- The employer becomes aware of violence occurring in similar workplaces that was not considered in the previous violence risk assessment.
- There is a significant change to the following:
  - Circumstances in which work takes place.
  - Interactions that occur while performing the work.
  - Physical location or layout of the workplace.
- Employer plans to construct or renovate a facility.
- Employer is ordered to do so by an officer.

The employer should consult with the Occupational Health and Safety committee or representative when conducting the violence risk assessment and provide them with a copy of the written report.

## Workplace Violence Prevention Plan

An employer must establish and implement a workplace violence prevention plan where a significant risk of violence was identified. The employer must consult with the committee or representative while establishing, reviewing or revising the violence prevention plan. The violence prevention plan must be made available at the workplace.

The employer must prepare a workplace violence prevention statement. This includes:

- Employer's recognition:
  - that violence is an occupational health and safety hazard at the workplace.
  - of the physical and emotional harm resulting from violence.
  - that any form of violence is unacceptable.
- Employer's commitment to minimize and eliminate the risk of violence.

The following must be done as part of a violence prevention plan:

- Prepare a written workplace violence prevention statement.
- Either:
  - Take and document reasonable measures to minimize and eliminate the risk of violence; OR
  - Adopt a code of practice on violence in the workplace.
- Establish and document procedures for providing employees with the information and training required.
- Establish and document procedures for reporting, documenting and investigating incidents of violence.

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## Training and Supervision

An employer must provide adequate training for any employee exposed to significant risk of violence.

Training must include the following topics:

- Rights and responsibilities of employees
- Workplace violence prevention statement
- Measures taken by the employer to minimize or eliminate the risk
- How to recognize a situation in which there is a potential for violence and how to respond appropriately
- How to respond to an incident of violence, including how to obtain assistance
- How to report, document and investigate incidents of violence

Any employee required to perform a function under the workplace violence prevention plan must have general training on the plan and on their particular function.

All incidents of violence must be reported to the employer.

## Documentation, Investigation and Preventative Actions

The employer must provide an employee with information on the nature and extent of the risk of violence, and any factors increasing or decreasing that risk.

Where a person has a history of violent behavior, the employer has a duty to provide employees with that information.

All incidents of violence must be documented and promptly investigated to determine the cause and required actions to prevent reoccurrence.

Employers must provide an employee exposed to or affected by violence at the workplace with appropriate debriefing and advise the employee to consult a health professional for treatment or counseling.

The actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of violence must be given to the affected employee and the Occupational Health and Safety committee or representative.

### DISCLAIMER:

*This fact sheet is a general overview for information purposes only. Farmers must reference legislation to ensure compliance.*