

**The Corporation of the
Town of Hearst**



Policies and Procedures

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

Health and Safety Department

By-law No: 33-11

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to promote a safe working environment, free of violence, and to establish a procedure that prohibits violence in the workplace. Violence in the workplace is a potential safety hazard for all employees.

DEFINITIONS

Workplace Violence: Refers to any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse occurring in the workplace by employees or third parties. It includes, but is not limited to, beating, stabbing, shooting, rape, psychological trauma such as threats, obscene phone calls, an intimidating presence, and harassment of any nature such as stalking, shouting or swearing.

Workplace: Refers to any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, alternate work locations, and travel to and from work assignments.

Weapons: Include, but not limited to, any gun, knife or other item held with intent to cause bodily harm to any employee.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all union and non-union employees of the Corporation and members of Council.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees share the responsibility of supporting a violence free workplace and reporting any incidents of violence.

Heads of Department, supervisors and managers are responsible for providing their employees with a safe work environment, free from violence. They must ensure that violence is not tolerated, ignored or condoned.

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The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to at all times.

PROCEDURE

The Corporation is committed to workplace health, safety and security for all of its employees and visitors. All employees of the Corporation have the right to work in an environment free from violence. With this in mind, the Corporation has established a “zero-tolerance” for violence.

Violent action, threats and harassment are serious criminal offences, and shall be dealt with appropriately. Any Town of Hearst employee who threatens, harasses or abuses another employee, or any other individual at or from the workplace shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and the pursuit of legal action.

Workplace violence may be physical or psychological in nature. Sources of these behaviours include co-workers, clients of services, the public at large, employers, supervisors and domestic/intimate partners. Prohibited violent workplace behaviours may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Threatening to injure an individual or to damage property;
- Engaging in behaviour that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person;
- Engaging in behaviour that subjects another individual to extreme emotional distress;
- Possessing, brandishing, or using a weapon that is not required by the individual’s work while on Corporation premises or engaged in Corporation business;
- Injuring another person physically;
- Intentionally damaging property;
- Retaliating against any employee who, in good faith, reports a violation of this policy.

Risk Assessment:

The supervisor shall assess their workplace for any risk of violence resulting from:

- a) The nature of the workplace,
- b) The type of work,
- c) The conditions of the work.

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This assessment will take into account:

- a) Circumstances specific to the workplace;
- b) Circumstances common to similar workplaces (i.e. similar workplaces would possess similar hazards and require similar controls), and
- c) Any other legislated requirements.

These assessments will be provided to the Chief Administrative Officer and Health and Safety Officer for review and will be shared with joint health and safety committees.

The Town of Hearst will take reasonable precautions to deal with all risks identified in the risk assessments.

Domestic Violence:

If a Head of Department or supervisor or manager becomes aware of, or reasonably ought to be aware of domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to potential physical injury which may occur in the workplace, the Head of Department or supervisor or manager shall take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of that worker.

Workplace Violence Program

1. All employees within the Town of Hearst will attend violence in the workplace training. This training shall include workplace violence prevention strategies including complaint resolution, listening and communication skills, identifying problematic behaviour characteristics, anger management, and such other matter as may be deemed pertinent.
2. The Town of Hearst has instituted the following security measures to minimize the risk of violence on its premises:
 - a) The Town of Hearst properties shall be accessed only by employees, taxpayers, clients and visitors conducting legitimate business activity or using municipal services.
 - b) Visitors and taxpayers will be limited in their travels on Town property as required to conduct legitimate business activity or to use municipal services and as provided for in section HS-3 entitled "Visitors and General Public Responsibilities" of the Town of Hearst Health and Safety Policy and Procedure Manual.

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- c) As part of the hiring process, background investigations will be conducted to review candidates to reduce the risk of hiring individuals with a history of violent behaviour.
- d) The Town of Hearst shall be allowed to conduct searches and inspections of any of its property without prior notice given.

The supervisor will provide information to a worker, including personal information, related to a risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour if:

- a) The worker can be expected to encounter that person in the course of his or her work, and
 - b) The risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the worker to physical injury.
3. When responding to an abusive telephone call, a worker will:
- a) Advise the caller that the call will be ended if the caller does not stop using abusive language;
 - b) Interrupt the conversation firmly, but politely;
 - c) Advise his/her supervisor of the incident.
4. If an employee feels threatened in a face to face verbal altercation, he/she shall:
- a) Try to politely and calmly terminate the interaction in a non-threatening manner;
 - b) Request the person to leave the workplace and if the person refuses to cooperate, state that the police will be notified;
 - c) Get help (call his/her supervisor or someone more senior);
 - d) If the need is felt or in question, call the police.
5. The Town of Hearst maintains a full and total ban on the possession of weapons on Town of Hearst premises. This includes weapons either kept or transported in any vehicle on Town of Hearst premises. This ban excludes police services.
6. In the event that an employee is either directly affected by or is witness to any violence in the workplace, it is essential for the safety of all Town of Hearst employees that the incident be reported promptly. All incidences of violence in the workplace will be reported to the Head of Department, supervisor, to the Health and Safety Officer and to the Chief Administrative Officer. Complaints can be made in person, through e-mail, in writing or by telephone. All reports will be kept confidential. All reports of violence in the workplace will be investigated and dealt with appropriately.

When complaints are brought forward, it is imperative that all parties involved maintain confidentiality in an attempt to protect the privacy of all individuals. However, confidentiality may be compromised in cases where it is perceived that imminent danger exists for other workers or in cases where it is required by law.

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7. The Corporation is committed to providing support services to victims of violence. Confidential Crisis Intervention Counselling through the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) shall be available to employees who are victims of violence and to those who are experiencing personal problems in relation to violence.

DOCUMENTS

Visitors and General Public – Responsibilities – section HS-3 of the Town of Hearst Health and Safety Policy and Procedure manual.

FORMS

Risk Assessment

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Policy Name: Violence in the Workplace Policy
Approval Date: April 27, 2011 (per By-law No. 33-11)
Next Review Date: January 2012
Approved by:

Mayor

Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk