

# Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard  
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## **V**iolence at Work

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define work-related violence as: “Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work”.

HSE statistics show that verbal abuse and threats are the most common types of incidents and that physical assaults are comparatively rare. However facilities management service delivery staff are on the frontline in many of the occupations most at risk especially those working in security, cleaning, catering and reception services. The problem is widespread and one in five workers have been physically or verbally assaulted whilst at work.

Health and safety law states that all employers should have a clearly defined statement of any potential risks including those that their employees might face from violence. The statement should spell out what action the employer proposes to take to reduce this risk.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 state that employers must carry out a risk assessment to protect employees from exposure to reasonably foreseeable violence. A risk assessment is an examination to determine what hazards exist in your workplace. A hazard is anything that could cause harm to people, including verbal or physical abuse.

Employers must then decide whether there are enough measures to protect people or whether they need to take action to eliminate or reduce the risk of the hazards that they have identified.

A risk assessment on violence at work must firstly identify hazardous situations arising from work where violence might occur. For example, jobs which require workers to deal with members of the public or a job that involves dealing with money. Any employee who may have a vulnerable job or be placed in a potentially dangerous situation should be identified.

The risks arising from the hazards must be evaluated and a decision made on whether existing precautions are adequate or what more needs to be done. The employer must look at the potential for a verbal or physical assault, and then put in place measures to eliminate or reduce the risk so that harm is unlikely.

Measures that a facilities manager might consider could include protective screens, better lighting, additional security for late night staff or changing shift patterns so that no-one works alone. Guidance should be provided for staff in how to organise their work so that the risk of violence is reduced along with training on how to deal with violent situations.

The measures taken to prevent violence in the work place should be recorded and communicated to all staff that may be at risk. The risk assessment should be reviewed periodically to take into account of any new information or changed circumstances.

*The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have a free guidance booklet on Violence at Work (INDG69) which is available for download at [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf)*