

OCTOBER *Safety Talk*

Topic: Domestic Violence



The term *domestic violence* describes a range of behaviours or actions taken by a person to control and dominate another person. It is characterized by abusive, coercive, forceful, or threatening acts or words used by one member of a family, household, or intimate relationship against another.

It may also take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and/or spiritual abuse.

There have been many instances in BC where domestic violence spilled over to the workplace and workers were injured or killed as a result.

An abusive partner or family member may make harassing phone calls, stalk a victim at work, or make threats that put the victim and others in the workplace at risk. Workers other than the victim have been injured or killed while trying to intervene, or while going about their everyday work, unaware of the threat.

As the employer, or a fellow worker, what can you do?

A victim is at greatest risk when leaving an abusive relationship. Avoid telling your employee or fellow worker what to do.

When talking about domestic violence:

- Be supportive
- Don't judge
- Ask Questions

**The
"domestic"
part doesn't
matter.
Violence is
violence.**

You can support a worker who is experiencing domestic violence by developing a personal safety plan for their time at work.

It should be tailored to the employee's self-identified needs, keeping the overall safety of the workplace in mind.

As the employer, you have some legal responsibilities under WorkSafeBC's OH&S Regulation.

There are four steps you need to take to address these responsibilities:

1. If you learn of a threat, **assess the risk**. This may be a complex process, and a situation that appears to be of no immediate threat of danger could change over time.
2. **Eliminate or minimize the risk**. You must take steps to eliminate or minimize the risk to the victim and to fellow workers. If the threat of violence is imminent, call the police immediately.
3. **Instruct your workers**; inform them of a hazard as soon as it is identified. Only staff who may encounter the individual in the course of their employment should be informed; there are competing legal obligations with respect to privacy and safety.
4. **Respond to an incident**; report and/or investigate the incident and take appropriate action.

When two employees are in a domestic violence situation with each other

(both partners in a violent relationship work in the same organization) the organization has to respond appropriately to both the victim and the perpetrator.

