



## WHAT IS WORK RELATED VIOLENCE?

HSE's most recent definition of violence is set out in HSE leaflet IND(G)69 (Rev) as:

**'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'**

This establishes violence as a behaviour with the potential to cause harm. Broadly speaking there are three forms:

- Non-physical violence (intimidation, abuse, threats etc)
- Physical violence (punching, kicking, pushing etc)
- Aggravated physical violence (sustained attack, group violence, use of weapons, e.g. guns, knives, syringes, pieces of furniture, bottles, glasses, etc)

This definition supersedes one that was restricted to violent acts by the public.

The change was made to align it with the broader criteria for reporting acts of violence contained in RIDDOR 95.

Only incidents that are directly related to work are within the scope of health and safety legislation. Incidents that are personal in nature will not be within scope. An example of an incident directly related to work would be assault of a supervisor by an employee who resented an instruction to work overtime. Another example would be verbal abuse from the relative of a patient to a hospital receptionist because they believed waiting times were excessive.

An example of an incident which occurred at work, but which was not related to it, would be assault of a supervisor by an employee because he believes the supervisor has stolen his wallet.

Employees travelling between home and their normal place of work, will not be within the scope of health and safety legislation. This will be the case even if they are subject to an assault which is linked to their employment, eg an assault by someone who has a grievance connected with the employee's work.

However, violence sustained during travel that forms part of legitimate employment will be in scope of health and safety legislation if it is directly related to work. Examples would be assault of social workers whilst removing a child from its home or of lorry drivers in the course of a hijack.

### **LONDON REGIONAL OFFICE**

Devlin House 36 St George Street, Mayfair  
LONDON W1R 9FA  
Tel: +44 (0) 207 529 1451

**Fax:** +44 (0) 1904 494608 **E-mail:** [trainers@securicare.com](mailto:trainers@securicare.com)

### **YORK HEAD OFFICE**

Martin House, Barley Rise, Strensall  
YORK YO32 5AA  
Tel: +44 (0) 1904 492 442

## WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF WORK RELATED VIOLENCE?

Violence in all its forms is a concern for staff and management alike. For employers, violence can lead to poor morale and a poor image for the organisation, making it difficult to recruit and keep staff. It can also mean extra costs, such as those associated with absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and legal fees, fines and compensation payments where negligence is proven.

For employees, violence can cause pain, distress and even disability or death. Physical attacks are obviously dangerous but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can also damage employees' health through anxiety or stress.

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[www.securicare.com](http://www.securicare.com)