

Late-Night Working



Preventing violence to staff



Usdaw
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers



Violent crime continues to increase and retail workers are often on the frontline. British Retail Consortium figures show that one shopworker is attacked or threatened every minute of the shopping day. Extended trading hours have increased the exposure to risk. Reduced staffing levels for late-night trading and problems with drunken customers make things even worse.



When is the risk greater?

Opening and closing of the store have been identified as particularly risky times. Closing a store late at night is much worse than closing in the early evening. It also means that night shift staff such as shelf fillers have to travel to or from work at later hours when access to public transport or even use of their own cars may be more risky.

24-hour operation of petrol filling stations, often with single staffing, is a further area where the risk is greater, particularly where the petrol station attendant is required to sell other goods apart from petrol.

Women workers feel particularly vulnerable and the stress that this causes can itself be a problem, even when they are not a victim of an attack.

Staff who are keyholders and are called out in the middle of the night if the store alarm has gone off also feel particularly vulnerable, especially if they are expected to enter the premises on their own.



Usdaw members in the firing line

Usdaw members are all too often victims of violence in the workplace. Here are a few examples of typical incidents, some of which have resulted in improved security measures.

Bristol

At several stores many reports of verbal abuse, physical assault, including three armed robberies. Worst time for incidents was between 8pm and 10pm.

Swansea

Knife, gun and arson attacks and intimidation by gangs of youths when closing up late at night. Workers frightened when waiting for buses late at night or where public transport is not available. Fewer staff on duty during late night trading when incidence of shoplifting and vandalism is more common.

North Wales

Assault in store car park led to the following measures: Car park lights to be left on all night, bushes and shrubs cleared away, system of escorting staff to their cars when leaving store at night, offering staff personal attack alarms at £5 each.

Enfield

24 hour petrol station staff having to deal with abusive and aggressive customers. Kiosks being kept open till midnight to maximise sales. Staff having to walk alone across the car park to collect stock during the night. CCTV only being provided where there is concern about theft rather than staff safety.





Leeds

Abusive language, bottles being thrown and threats of being 'waited for' when leaving store. Staff arranged lifts home together. Management allowed parking in yard at back of store, which is poorly lit. Problems worst between 7.30pm - 8pm. Abuse from drug users and solvent sniffers. Earlier incidents about 4pm involving shoplifters. All late staff live within walking distance and no transport provided. CCTV and panic buttons fitted.

Glasgow

Following a number of violent incidents after extension of trading to 10pm the company has laid on transport home for staff.

Swindon

Armed robbery at petrol filling station by masked man with 10" knife.

Manchester

A member turns up for work at 4am and has to wait outside the store for Night Manager to let her in. A member working alone at night in a petrol filling station was threatened by two men wielding machetes.



Reducing the risks

- ◆ Employers should ensure that they have a system for reporting all incidents including threats or intimidation and incidents which are work related but happen outside of work (for example, when travelling to or from work).
- ◆ Risk assessments, required under health and safety law, should cover the issue of violence and, where late working causes particular problems, the risk assessment should recognise this.
- ◆ Employers should provide well lit access to stores for staff who have to enter or leave the store during the night.
- ◆ Car parks should be well lit at all times that staff are expected to use them. Where possible night staff should be allowed to park where there is easy access to the store and where their cars can be monitored by security staff. Bushes, shrubs and other obstructions which may provide a hiding place for assailants should be removed.
- ◆ If there are problems with public transport for staff who finish late, the employer should lay on transport.
- ◆ In high risk areas, individual workers should not be expected to open or close stores on their own. Staff who have to leave the store during the night should be escorted to their transport home. Staff who are expected to open/close stores should be trained so they know what to do if they see someone suspicious hanging about.
- ◆ Where possible, staff should not be expected to work on their own at high risk times, for example, in late opening stores, off licences or petrol filling stations. If it cannot be avoided then extra precautions will be needed to make sure they are protected and can call for assistance in an emergency.
- ◆ Staff who are keyholders should be trained in what to do in a call-out and should not be expected to enter the store on their own.



How Usdaw can help

- ◆ Where the Union is recognised, we can use the legal powers given to Usdaw Health and Safety Reps to raise the issue with the employer and to negotiate for improvements like the ones suggested in this leaflet to make work safer for our members.
- ◆ Reps and Area Organisers are available to offer advice and support for workplace issues.
- ◆ Reps work to support members when things go wrong.
- ◆ Usdaw offers support through FirstCall for accidents and injuries sustained while at work.
- ◆ The Retail Staff Survey helps Usdaw make a better case to employers and politicians to secure stronger protections. Share your experiences and suggestions here: www.usdaw.org.uk/respectsurvey

Legal support

If you're a victim of violence and you suffer serious injury in the UK, call FirstCall Usdaw on 0800 055 6333 to start your claim. Usdaw Legal Plus can help members claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, a state funded scheme.

To qualify for compensation, your injuries must be sufficiently serious to justify the minimum amount of compensation, £1,000; you must personally report the incident to the police within 48 hours and get a crime reference number; you must see a doctor immediately for treatment of physical injuries as well as psychological ones such as stress or shock.

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Join Usdaw

Usdaw understands the issues that staff face in the workplace and the more members we have, the stronger our case is with companies for better policies and better protections.

Simply complete a membership form and return it to Usdaw's Central Office. Just write **FREEPOST USDAW** on the envelope and put it in the post. You can also join online at www.usdaw.org.uk/join

For further information

Call our Helpline on **0800 030 80 30**
or visit www.usdaw.org.uk/fff

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