

Stopping Violent Crime at Work

Violent crime is a very real hazard for shopworkers. Usdaw knows just how serious the risk of work-related violence can be. The Union campaigns to make work safer for all shopworkers.

Every year thousands of retail workers are physically assaulted and hundreds of thousands are subjected to verbal abuse and intimidation whilst at work.

But there are things your employer can and should do to protect you. Many of these violent incidents could have been prevented.

10 Pointers to a Safer Workplace

Every workplace is different and there is no single simple solution in most workplaces. But here are some pointers:

- 1 Be prepared** – Would you know what to do if you spot a shoplifter or credit card fraud or if there is a robbery? Your employer should have procedures in place to deal with incidents when they happen.
- 2 Physical protection** – Security measures, alarms, CCTV, protective barriers, panic buttons can all help. Staff need to know how to operate security systems provided.
- 3 Training** – Staff need to know what they are expected to do when an incident develops, how to follow safe working procedures, how to use security equipment properly.
- 4 Cash handling** – Cash should be kept out of sight and not allowed to build up in the till.
- 5 Banking** – Where possible banking should be done by specialist security staff, should not be done alone, should not be done on foot or by public transport. Staff who are expected to do it should be fully trained.
- 6 Shoplifters** – Over half of the physical assaults are linked to attempted shoplifting. Employers should make sure all staff know what to do if they see a suspected shoplifter. The policy should make it clear that no-one should risk personal safety to protect property.
- 7 Armed robbery** – Employers should train people to be prepared for armed robbery. Doing exactly what the robber tells you, not resisting, avoiding sudden movements, not raising the alarm until it is safe to do so, should all be part of the policy.
- 8 Lone working** – Working alone at high risk times, eg late at night, should be avoided. Where staff are expected to work alone, eg in a petrol kiosk, extra precautions should be taken.
- 9 Reporting incidents** – Employers need to know exactly what risks their staff are exposed to. A reliable system for recording all incidents helps to build up the picture.
- 10 Reviewing procedures** – To make sure that things are working properly, employers should review their procedures on a regular basis in consultation with the Union Health and Safety Reps.

Prevention

The best way to protect shopworkers against violence is to prevent incidents happening in the first place.

Your employer has a duty to make your work as safe as possible. Good trade union organisation reduces the risk.

Your Usdaw safety representative has legal powers to check on your employer's policy and to raise any problems. With your backing they can negotiate safer systems of work.

If you are concerned about the risk of violence talk to your Health and Safety Rep.

Nationally, Usdaw is working with the Government, the health and safety authorities and employers' organisations to make work safer and to tackle crime. For more information go to www.usdaw.org.uk/freedomfromfear

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