

Workplace Violence

The Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHSA) defines workplace violence as **the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker**. It also includes an:

- **attempt to exercise physical force against a worker in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker; and a**
- **statement or behaviour that a worker could reasonably interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.**

This may include:

- verbally threatening to attack a worker;
- leaving threatening notes at or sending threatening e-mails to a workplace;
- shaking a fist in a worker's face;
- wielding a weapon at work;
- hitting or trying to hit a worker;
- throwing an object at a worker;
- sexual violence against a worker; or
- kicking an object the worker is standing on such as a ladder

What if a worker is accidentally pushed or hurt?

Accidental situations – such as a worker tripping over an object and pushing a co-worker as a result – are not meant to be included.

Does the person need to intend to hurt the worker?

For workplace violence to occur, a person must apply, attempt to apply, or threaten to apply physical force against a worker. **However, he or she does not need to have the capacity to appreciate that these actions could cause physical harm.**

For example, a person may have a medical condition that causes them to act out physically in response to a stimulus in their environment. This would still be considered workplace violence.

Workplace violence could also include situations where two non-workers, students for example, are fighting and a worker is injured when he or she intervenes. The non-workers may not have intended their violence to spill over to anyone else, but they used physical force, which ultimately caused physical injury to a worker.

Domestic Violence

A person who has a personal relationship with a worker – such as a spouse or former spouse, current or former intimate partner or a family member – may physically harm, or attempt or threaten to physically harm, that worker at work. In these situations, domestic violence is considered workplace violence.

<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/wpvh/concepts.php>