



LEIA Safety Information Sheet

Violence at Work

Prepared by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee

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PREAMBLE

This Information Sheet is one of a series produced by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee on topics relevant to the Lift and Escalator Industry. Whilst every effort has been taken in the production of these sheets, it must be acknowledged that they should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation, codes of practice etc. They should not be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law but guidance to it.

INTRODUCTION

The cost of ignoring the risk of violence at work can be high. Effects of violence on an employee or on an employee who witnesses violence against others can lead to stress-related illnesses, sickness absence, reduced performance and potentially the loss of crucial staff through resignation or long-term sickness.

Background

The HSE definition of work-related violence is:

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

Employers should adopt a zero tolerance to this behaviour.

MANAGEMENT ACTION

Verbal abuse and threats are the most common types of incident; physical attacks are comparatively rare.

An incident of violence is most likely to affect field-based employees attending calls alone in unsupervised or public buildings or public areas at night but could occur anywhere at any time.

Employers should consider training for employees in defusing potentially violent situations.

Risk Assessment

Employers are required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR) to undertake a risk assessment of the foreseeable risks associated with work. When drawing up the risk assessment managers should consider the headings: People, Environment and Task: (see Appendix 1).

Should instances of violence be known to occur at particular locations then the measures that are to be considered by management include:

- Withdrawal of lifts from service at high risk times by the client to eliminate the need for attendance.
- Prohibition of attendance to calls at times when the problems are known to occur (e.g. not attending night calls).
- Provision by the client, of adequate trained security and supervision in building at the time work is undertaken.
- Deployment of two or more people (although in most situations this is unlikely to prove an adequate measure).
- Cancellation of the contract.

Support for Victims of Violence

In the event an employee is the victim of violence in the course of their work or is affected by witnessing violence related to their work, then it is recommended that appropriate support including counselling be provided.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events.

Someone with PTSD often relives the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt. They may also have problems sleeping, such as insomnia, and find concentrating difficult.

These symptoms are often severe and persistent enough to have a significant impact on the person's day-to-day life.

Employees should be encouraged to visit their GP if they are still having problems about four weeks after the traumatic experience, or if the symptoms are particularly troublesome.

Reporting

The police should be notified of any instance of violence.

Any instance of violence must also be reported in accordance with your own company accident reporting procedures and recorded. This will enable review of procedures and revising or implementing any of the above measures.

It should be noted that 'physical violence done to a person at work' is within the definition of an accident within RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) and where this results in either an over 7-day absence, a major injury or even death then the incident must also be reported to the enforcing authorities as well as the police.

EMPLOYEE ACTION

Warning Signs

Employees need to be alert to signs of trouble at all times.

If the employee is met by an unknown person consider:

- Are they mildly abusive getting worse as a conversation progresses?
- Do they exhibit irrational behaviour?
- Do they seem drunk or having abused drugs?
- Is there a crowd of potential aggressors?

If so, do not prolong any conversation, but withdraw.

Action

If in the course of work an employee perceives, or suspects, that there is the threat of violence from any person then they should leave the immediate vicinity and return to a place of safety. If necessary the aggressor can be told another tool or piece of equipment is required to do the job.

Employees should leave the site with the job made safe but uncompleted.

If persons are left trapped in a lift then the originator of the call must be contacted by phone and directed to the emergency services.

Further advice on defusing a potentially aggressive situation is contained in the guidance from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust: 'Personal Safety at Work: A Guide for Everyone' and 'Personal Safety at Work: Lone-Working'.

For any clarification of this information sheet contact your company Safety Advisor or the LEIA Safety and Training Manager.

REFERENCES:

Violence at work: A guide for employers

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>

A brief guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg453.htm>

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust Personal Safety at Work guides:

Personal Safety at Work: A Guide for Everyone

Personal Safety at Work: Lone-Working

<https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/downloadable-leaflets>

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), overview, symptoms, causes and treatment

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/treatment/>

APPENDIX 1 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

People

Who are employees likely to meet? Are they:

- total strangers or members of the public?
- people who are well known to the employee?
- people about whom employees know very little?
- people with a history of violence or aggression?
- likely to welcome their presence or are they dealing with a difficult subject?

Do any of the people employees meet pose any significant threat to their personal safety?

Environment

Where are employees working? Are they:

- in a reception area or a shop where there is open access to the public?
- going into someone else's home or territory?
- working out on the street amongst members of the public?
- visiting a rural or isolated area?
- able to communicate with base or call for back up if they feel threatened?
- able to let somebody know where they are, what they are doing and if their plans change?

Do any of the places employees go to pose a significant threat to their personal safety?

When are employees working? Is it:

- during office hours when there are many people around?
- late at night or early in the morning when employees are more isolated?

Do the hours employees work pose a significant threat to their personal safety?

Task

What are employees doing? Are they:

- dealing with cash?
- enforcing a rule?
- denying a service?
- carrying valuables or medical supplies?
- acting as a security service?