

Workplace Violence and Harassment Procedures

1. Purpose

The Town of Claresholm recognizes the potential for violence and harassment to occur is a hazard our workers [and elected officials](#) face. Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation also addresses this hazard and we must develop and implement violence and harassment prevention plans that include violence and harassment policies and violence and harassment prevention procedures. ~~The prevention plan therefore has two pieces:~~

- ~~1. Violence and Harassment Policy~~
- ~~2. Violence and Harassment Prevention Procedures~~

Familiarizing all workplace parties about the prevention plan, builds the understanding in our organization on how we shall address and control behaviors and actions that can constitute workplace violence and harassment. Controlling this hazard builds a safe, healthy, and supportive work environment promoting physical, physiological, and social wellbeing.

~~The intent of this Procedure is to provide guidance to staff and Elected Officials of the Town of Claresholm on how to respond to violence and harassment while maintaining personal safety, professionalism, and a respectful workplace. Violence and harassment can come from co-workers, customers or members of the public.~~

4.2. Hazard Identification, Assessment and Control Procedures

Management (with worker involvement) assesses workplace violence and harassment hazards in all jobs, and in the workplace. Management reviews risk assessments annually, as well as when new jobs are created, or job descriptions are changed substantially.

Formal and Field Level Hazard Assessments (i.e., Hazard Assessments) will be used as tools to assess the risk of violence and harassment at the workplace. These hazard assessments are to be conducted by competent personnel and consider the following risk factors:

1) Previous Experience

The history of violence and/or harassment in the workplace and the occupational experience in similar workplaces.

2) Vulnerability of Workers

Which workers are at risk of violence and/or harassment based on personal characteristics (e.g., gender, size, race, religion).

3) Sources of Threat

What persons or groups of persons that workers may meet or are likely to pose a threat of violence and/or harassment (e.g., members of the public, customers, clients).

4) Work Processes

Whether the work involves an unusually high degree of risk (e.g., handling money or valuables, working with mentally unstable people, direct contact with irate customers).

5) Work Conditions

Whether work conditions contribute to the danger of violence (e.g., working at night, working

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alone, working in dangerous neighborhoods).

6) Workplace Characteristics

How physical conditions of the workplace affect the danger (e.g., are doors and windows secured, is security nearby, if workers deal with the public are they in the open or behind secure barriers).

The competent person will use, at a minimum, the following data to assess violence hazards:

- 1) Internal reports** of workplace violence and/or harassment submitted by workers or other personnel.
- 2) Police reports** of violence and/or harassment about the work site.
- 3) JHSC meeting minutes and recommendations** pertaining to violence and/or harassment hazards.

Where hazard assessments identify workplace violence and/or harassment as a potential hazard to workers, the Town of Claresholm will implement procedures, policies, and work environment arrangements to eliminate, or where total elimination is not possible, minimize those hazards.

In selecting appropriate controls for eliminating or minimizing risks of workplace violence and/or harassment, the Town of Claresholm will follow the hierarchy of controls as outlined in the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code, including use of:

- 1) Engineering controls**, including but not limited to physical barriers, alarms, panic buttons, surveillance cameras, and lighting.
- 2) Administrative controls**, including but not limited to safe work procedures for performing job tasks involving risks of violence, such as handling cash, working alone or in isolation, and dealing with irate customers.
- 3) Personal protective equipment** such as a stab proof vest and/or a monitored radio system.

3. Training Procedures

New employees will receive both general and site-specific orientation to the workplace violence and harassment policy within the first week of employment that will include:

- Indication of workplace locations or job classifications where workplace violence and/or harassment has been identified as a potential hazard.
- How to recognize workplace harassment and violence and early warning signs.
- The plans and procedures that effectively assess, eliminate or control workplace violence and harassment.
- The appropriate response to workplace harassment and violence, including how to obtain assistance.
- Procedures for reporting incidents of workplace violence and harassment.

Individuals working in supervisory or managerial roles, or working in areas identified as high-risk as determined during the hazard assessment process may receive additional training including, but not limited to:

- Investigation and response to reports of workplace violence and/or harassment training, and
- Mediation training.

In addition, all employees shall review the policy and its procedures every three years or earlier if required.

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3.1 Procedures for Prevention and Managing Violence and Harassment

◆ A One-Page Quick Reference is available for staff and Elected Officials (Appendix 2.0).

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No incident of abuse is deserved, there are steps that workers can take to reduce the incidents of violence or harassment in the workplace. The following are practical suggestions:

a) Dealing with a Potentially Violent Person

Verbal Communication Procedures

- Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- DO NOT glare or stare, which may be perceived as a challenge.
- Remain calm and try to calm the other person. DO NOT allow the other person's anger to become your anger.
- Remain conscious of how you are delivering your words.
- Speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Speak simply. DO NOT rely on official language or complex terminology.
- Avoid communicating a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.
- Listen carefully. DO NOT interrupt or offer unsolicited advice or criticism.
- Encourage the person to talk. DO NOT tell the person to relax or calm down.
- Remain open-minded and objective.
- Use silence as a calming tool.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see he or she is upset.

Non-Verbal Behavior and Communication Procedures

- Use calm body language - relaxed posture with hands unclenched, attentive expression.
- Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked.
- Position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Give the person enough physical space. This varies by culture, but normally 1-2 meters is considered an adequate distance.
- Get on the other person's physical level. If they are seated try kneeling or bending over, rather than standing over them. DO NOT pose a challenging stance such as: standing directly opposite someone; putting your hands on your hips; pointing your finger; waving your arms; crossing your arms.
- DO NOT make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening.
- DO NOT fight.
- Walk or run away.
- Get assistance.

b) Responding to a Physical Assault if you are Attacked

- If you are assaulted or in a physical confrontation, as soon as able, immediately call the police by dialing 911.
- Make a scene, yell, or scream as loudly as possible. Try shouting words like STOP, FIRE or HELP.
- If you are being pulled along or dragged, fall to the ground and roll making as much noise as possible.
- Blow a whistle, activate your personal security alarm or push the security alarm.
- Give bystanders specific instructions to help you. Single someone out and send them for help. For example, "You in the yellow shirt, call the police."
- If someone grabs your purse, briefcase or other belongings, DO NOT resist. Throw the item to the ground several feet away from the thief and run in the opposite direction, yelling "help" or "fire".
- DO NOT chase a thief.
- Run to the nearest safe place, a safe office, or an open store.
- File an incident report.
- Be Prepared - Take a self-defense course. Try to imagine yourself responding successfully to different types of attacks and practice your responses.

c) Working Off-Site

If you work away from a traditional office setting you must exercise extra caution. In many cases you have less or no ability to control your work environment. Nevertheless, the following specific preventive procedures will minimize or prevent risks associated with working off-site:

- Have access to a cellular telephone or similar means of communication.
- Use an established check-in procedure that allows you to manage typical situations you may encounter off-site.
- Prepare a daily work plan so that you and others know where and when you are expected somewhere.
- For meetings, arrange to meet in a safe environment.
- Be alert and make mental notes of your surroundings when you arrive at a new or different setting.
- Use the "buddy system", especially when you feel your personal safety may be threatened.
- Determine under which circumstances unaccompanied visiting would involve unacceptable risk.
- Exercise your right to refuse to work in clearly hazardous situations.
- Disclose any feelings of discomfort or apprehension about an impending meeting to your supervisor.
- DO NOT enter any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe.
- Carry hand-held alarms, noise devices or other effective alarm devices.
- When you are in unfamiliar premises:
 - Check for escape routes and position yourself near an escape route.
 - Mentally rehearse what you will do if an individual becomes aggressive or hostile.
 - Decide what your best preventive tactic will be.
- Take control of the seating arrangements. If possible, seat yourself near the door.
- Maintain a "reactionary gap" between you and the person. This means, be out of reach of the average person's kicking and/or arm reach distance. Increase the gap by sitting at a table.

- Be always aware of the person's proximity.
- Be well prepared for an appointment. Review the available information about the individual(s) you are meeting.
- Terminate the appointment in a non-confrontational manner if the individual appears to be intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, emotionally disturbed and threatening or out of control.
- DO NOT allow yourself to be backed into a corner. Leave a clear path to the exit.
- DO NOT venture too far into the premises (e.g., remain near an exit).
- DO NOT turn your back on the person or enter a room first.

d) Procedure For Engaging with Difficult Individuals

- Remain calm and speak in a clear, steady tone.
- Listen actively and acknowledge concerns without agreeing to inappropriate behaviour.
- Set clear, respectful boundaries.
- Keep interactions factual and brief.

Sample phrases that may be used when engaging with difficult individuals:

- "I want to help, but I need us to speak respectfully."
- "I understand you're frustrated. Let's focus on what I can assist with."
- "I'm not able to continue this conversation if the language continues."
- "Let me explain the process and the options available."

e) Procedure For Disengaging from Disrespectful Or Escalating Behaviors

1. Clearly state the boundary and consequence.
2. End the interaction calmly.
3. Remove yourself from the situation if necessary.
4. Seek assistance from a supervisor or manager.

Sample disengagement phrases:

- "I've asked that we keep this respectful. I'm ending this conversation now."
- "I'm going to involve my supervisor to assist further."
- "You may contact the Town in writing or return at another time."

f) Procedure For When the Situation Becomes Threatening

- End the interaction immediately.
- Move to a secure or populated area.
- Contact a supervisor or manager right away.
- Call emergency services if there is an immediate threat.

Staff are not expected to tolerate abuse or remain in unsafe situations.

4. Reporting and Investigation Procedures

- ❖ All reporting must be done using the Workplace Violence and/or Harassment Incident Report found in appendix 1.0. (Further referred to as the incident report).
- ❖ Records will be retained for seven (7) years unless otherwise stated by law or another policy.

4.1 Step 1: Assessing the Danger and/or Threat Level of an Incident

a) Imminent Danger - Immediate Reporting

Any Employee who finds or considers themselves or someone else to be in imminent danger while on Town property or while engaged in any Town-approved activity can summon immediate assistance by contacting the police (911). Once the incident has been de-escalated the worker must report the incident Human Resources, another Manager, or the JHSC using the incident report.

b) Violent Incident/Threats:

Employees who become involved in or witness a violent incident or a threat of violence or who receive a report of such an incident are required to:

- 1) Ensure their own safety,
- 2) If deemed necessary call 911,
- 3) Do what is safely possible to ensure a victim's safety,
- 4) Provide or if required, call for medical assistance,
- 5) Complete an incident report.

c) Non-Urgent Threats

Incidents involving statements or behaviors that do not present an immediate risk of physical harm, but make the worker feel threatened or otherwise concerned for his/her safety must be reported promptly to their Manager, the Human Resources Manager, another Manager, or the JHSC using the incident report.

- Examples of such unwanted activity include a threatening comment, note, email, voicemail, gesture, or a behavior such as stalking.

d) Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence in the Alberta OHS Code states that when an employer is aware that a worker is or is likely to be exposed to domestic violence at the work site, the employer must take reasonable precautions to protect the worker and any other persons at the work site likely to be affected.

Workers in a personal relationship involving domestic violence are encouraged to report their concerns to their immediate Manager, Human Resources Manager, another Manager and/or Supervisor if they feel the violence may extend to Town property or to a Town sanctioned activity. Workers who become aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, of workers involved in

domestic violence that would likely expose the worker to physical injury on the town's property must immediately inform their Manager, Supervisor or Human Resource's Manager.

4.2 Step 2: General Reporting Requirements

- 1) Employees must report all incidents of workplace violence and/or harassment to their Manager, Supervisor, Human Resources Manager (HR) or Police as appropriate as soon as possible.
 - ❖ Complaints can be issued verbally.
 - ❖ Completing the incident report is mandatory but depending on the situation communicating the threat may be critical to dealing with the hazard.
 - ❖ Hazards that could impact life safety must be reported immediately.
 - ❖ During an incident of violence, individuals should first work to ensure the safety of themselves and others in the area and call 911 for medical treatment as needed.
- 2) Report may be submitted to any of the following: a supervisor, a manager, HR, the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).
- 3) The individual receiving the incident report will investigate and ensure all measures are taken to safeguard employees and/or the complainant immediately and restrict any further violence and/or harassment if possible.
- 4) Completing the incident report as soon as possible will capture the most detail.
- 5) At times, the worker that experienced the incident may be fearful or have been threatened about filing a report and will therefore not file a report. This is not tolerated by the organization and is in itself, violence and/or harassment and must be reported, therefore if you witness these actions, report it.
- 6) All reported incidents will be investigated within a reasonable timeframe.
- 7) All records incident reports and subsequent investigations are considered confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone except when required by law.
- 8) The Town of Claresholm will do everything it can to protect the privacy of the individuals involved and to ensure the Complainant and Accused are treated fairly and respectfully.
- 9) The Town of Claresholm will protect their privacy so long as doing so remains consistent with this policy and adherence to the law.
- 10) Disclosure in writing will be provided to the Complainant and the Accused of the result of the investigation and corrective action(s) taken.

4.3 Step 3: Reporting Procedure

Incidents of workplace violence and/or harassment shall be reported immediately where possible. Harassment incidents should be reported no later than one year after the last incident of perceived harassment unless there are circumstances that have prevented the individual from doing so.

The worker reporting the incident should be prepared to provide details of the event(s) for the incident report, including, but not limited to:

- Distinguish if this incident was an act of violence and/or harassment,
- What happened,
- When it happened,
- Where it happened,
- The frequency of the event(s), and

- Whether any witnesses were present,
- Sign and date the report.

After an incident has been reported, the person that the complaint has been filed against will be notified, in writing, of the violence and/or harassment complaint, including details of the allegations that have been made against him or her.

If the incident involves a fatality, or results in an individual being admitted to a hospital ensure that:

- The area where the incident occurred is cordoned off and not disturbed except to attend to an injured or deceased person.
- Immediately notify the CAO after the worker has been attended to.
- Immediately contact the appropriate investigative parties, which may include the Police and Occupational Health and Safety.

4.4 Step 4: Investigation Procedure

The Town of Claresholm will ensure that reports of workplace violence and/or harassment submitted by workers and/or witnesses are taken seriously and investigated in a prompt, thorough, fair, and objective manner by individuals who possess appropriate training and experience. The investigation will consist of the following steps:

- 1) Written report received by the Human Resources (HR) manager will be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).
- 2) CAO will establish an investigation team
- 3) Investigation meeting with the worker who filed the report.
- 4) Investigation meeting with the accused.
- 5) Investigation meetings with witness provided by both parties if applicable.
- 6) CAO/HR will review all documents and investigation notes.
 - ❖ If required additional meetings may be scheduled to clarify any conflicting information or gaps in information.
- 7) HR will provide a written summary report of findings, corrective actions and any recommendations and/or preventative steps to prevent reoccurrence.
- 8) Meetings with both parties will be conducted to review the outcome and discuss next steps.

4.5 Step 5: Violence Resolution and Discipline Procedure

- ❖ A ban/restriction must be done using the CAO Ban/Restriction Letter (Appendix 3.0).

After the completion of an investigation, the investigator's report will be provided to the Town of Claresholm management and other involved parties.

Any workers found by the investigation to have engaged in workplace violence and/or harassment will be subject to discipline in accordance with the Town of Claresholm's progressive disciplinary

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policy and procedures.

The Town of Claresholm will ensure that workers who report workplace violence are notified of the findings of the investigation as soon as reasonably possible and that necessary corrective actions are taken to ensure that problems that led to the incident are adequately addressed.

Retaliation in any form by those involved in the investigation will be grounds for discipline up to and including termination.

If the incident involves a member of the public against a ~~worker~~ staff member and/or Elected Official for the Town of Claresholm, the CAO is authorized to ~~evict or ban~~ and/or impose restrictions people ~~from municipal facilities~~ if the offending individual is:

- Causing workplace violence and/or harassment,
- Causing or likely to cause damage to a municipal facility or Town property,
- Behaving in a manner that is unsafe for the individual or others in the facility,
- Harassing, threatening or unduly disturbing other citizens or users,
- Behaving in a deviant or socially unacceptable manner.

If, upon being directed to leave the facility, the offending person refuses to do so, the person is to be advised that the police will be called, and the person may be charged under the Trespass to Premises Act. The Town of Claresholm also reserves the right to seek further legal action.

When considering restrictions or bans, the CAO should:

- Base decisions on documented incidents and patterns of behaviors.
- Ensure restrictions are proportionate and reasonable.
- Specify the duration, scope, and conditions of the ban.
- Communicate decisions in writing, including expectations for future conduct.
- Coordinate with legal counsel and/or law enforcement when required.

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5. Support for Workers Affected

The Town of Claresholm Management will respond promptly, assess the situation, and ensure that these interventions are followed as appropriate:

- 1) Facilitation of medical attention,
- 2) Debriefing (by a skilled professional),
- 3) Referrals to community agencies, treating practitioner and employee assistance program,
- 4) Referral to the union representative of an applicable collective agreement,
- 5) Completion of incident reports, OH&S reports and WCB reports,
- 6) Reporting to police (as required), and
- 7) Team debriefing.

6. Accountability

All workplace parties are accountable for complying with the policy and procedures related to workplace violence and harassment prevention plan.

At orientation, workers shall be made aware of the violence and harassment hazards (e.g., violent clients, who have been identified as having a history of violence or violent incidents).

7. Confidentiality

All parties to a violence and/or harassment complaint are expected to respect the privacy and confidentiality of all other parties involved, and to limit the discussion of a violence and/or harassment complaint to those that need to know.

The Town of Claresholm and all individuals involved in the violence and/or harassment complaint process will comply with all requirements of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP).

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Appendix 1.0

~~Workplace Violence and/or Harassment Incident Report~~

~~This incident report is to be completed by an employee/individual who has allegedly been the victim of Workplace Violence and/or Harassment. The term allegedly is used because individuals involved are innocent until proven otherwise. When this report is completed, it must be submitted to either your Manager, Supervisor, Joint Health and Safety Committee or Human Resources Manager. If your concern is regarding your direct Manager or Supervisor, then it may be submitted directly to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Joint Health and Safety Committee or the Human Resources Manager.~~

~~1. Complainant Information~~

~~Name: _____~~

~~Position Title: _____~~

~~Department: _____~~

~~Phone Number: _____~~

~~2. Respondent (alleged offender) Information~~

Name: _____
Department: _____
Position Title: _____

3- Description of Violence and/or Harassment Incident

Please describe, in as much detail as possible, the incident using the following questions:

~~☐ Was this an act of violence, harassment or both?~~

~~☐ Who was involved?~~

~~☐ What was specifically said or done (words, tone, actions, etc.)?~~

~~☐ When did it happened (dates and times)?~~

~~☐ Where did it primarily occur?~~

~~☐ Describe any witnesses to the incident(s) (names and contact information, if possible)~~

~~☐ How have the incident(s) impacted you?~~

~~☐ If the incident(s) was reported to management (please provide details—who, when, what action was taken etc.)?~~

4.-Relevant Time Period

~~☐ When did the workplace Violence and/or Harassment begin?~~

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~~☐ When did the most recent incident occur?~~

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5.-Summary Information

Questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Involves multiple incidents of workplace violence and/or harassment			
Involves a single incident of workplace violence and/or harassment			
Involves physical contact and/or assault			
Involves verbal abuse and/or threats			
Involves reprisal and/or retaliation			
Involves abuse of authority (use of authority serving no legitimate work purpose)			
Involves sexual harassment (harassment which is gender based/of a sexual nature)			
Involves discriminatory harassment (based on prohibited			

ground of discrimination)			
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If the answer was "yes" to the last question (discriminatory harassment) what ~~Prohibited Ground~~ was the basis of the workplace violence and/or harassment?

- ~~Prohibited Grounds means race, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability, or any other prohibited grounds set out in the Human Rights Code.~~

6. Certification and Signature

~~I certify the information provided in the incident report to be accurate, true, and complete to the best of my knowledge.~~

~~I understand that I will not be subject to any adverse treatment because of making this complaint, provided that it has not been made for improper purpose and that I have not provided information that I know to be incorrect, untrue, or misleading.~~

~~I acknowledge that, to preserve the integrity of the process and to protect the interests of all parties, I will maintain confidentiality and will not discuss this complaint with anyone other than those who need to know (e.g., management representatives, and union representative).~~

~~I understand that the Town of Clareholm will maintain the confidentiality of any information gathered as a result of this complaint but will share such information as necessary to pursue the investigation and resolution,~~

~~including disclosing the complaint and related information to the Respondent or as otherwise required by law.~~

~~_____
(Name Please Print) (Signature) (Date)~~