

Bamfield Marine Sciences Center Workplace Violence Policy

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PART I: Purpose and definitions

Policy Statement

The Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre recognizes the potential for violent acts or threats directed against staff at the workplace by other BMSC employees or any other person at the workplace. The BMSC is committed to working with its employees to maintain a work environment free from violence while upholding the dignity and respect of all employees.

Purpose

The purpose of the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre's Workplace Violence Policy is to prevent and protect its employees from workplace violence. This document outlines the policy, roles and responsibilities of all BMSC employees and the related procedures.

This policy defines violence as any negligent act or behaviour in which an employee is assaulted, abused or threatened in the work setting or continuing from the work setting. The aggressor may be another BMSC employee at any level of the organization, someone with whom the employee has a personal relationship, a stranger, a client, a contractor or a visitor. Violence includes but is not limited to:

- Behaviour which gives a person reason to believe that he or she or any other person is at risk of injury
- Beatings, stabbings, suicides, shootings, rapes and near suicides;
- Acts causing psychological trauma such as threats, obscene phone calls, mental cruelty and intimidation and threatening hand gestures or body language

Your co-operation in the maintenance of a violence free environment is important. If an incident involving a BMSC employee occurs on BMSC property or in conjunction with BMSC activities, the safety committee will conduct an investigation. Any questions about this policy should be addressed to Tom Bird (ext 222) or the safety committee.

Our Preventing Workplace Violence Policy will:

1. Enable employees to work in a safe and healthy workplace environment
2. Provide a consistent and focused approach on preventing workplace violence
3. Provide the framework for an appropriate response to threats and violence.
4. Require prompt and accurate reporting of all violence and threats as defined below.

Guidelines

The BMSC will:

- Periodically re-evaluate the BMSC workplace for potential threats
- Respect and protect the interest of all parties
- Promote and sustain a safe and healthy work environment
- Promote and sustain a Work Place Violence Prevention program

Stakeholders

This policy is written with BMSC employees in mind, as well as the Bamfield Marine Sciences Center Staff Association Representative. The authority for this policy comes from the Director of the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply.

Employee: All people working, studying and doing research for or at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. This includes students, visiting scientists (Post Doctorate Fellows) or staff involved in collaborative ventures with the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. This also includes visitors and contractors.

Employer: Any supervisor, manager, director or member of WCUMSS management council within the BMSC.

Violence: Any act or behavior, as well as all incidents in which an employee is assaulted, abused or threatened in the work setting or continuing from the work setting. It includes but is not limited to:

- Beatings, stabbings, suicides, shootings, rapes and any physical contact with intent to harm;
- Acts causing psychological trauma such as threats, obscene phone calls, mental cruelty and intimidation and threatening hand gestures or body language
- Behavior which gives a person reason to believe that he or she or any other person is at risk of injury.

The aggressor may be any employee at any level of the organization, someone with whom you have a personal relationship, a stranger, a client, a contractor or a visitor.

Workplace: A place where an employee is engaged in work for the employee's employer. (Canada Labour Code Part II 122 (1)). This is not necessarily a building or structure, it is a "place" where an employee is engaged in "work" for the employer.

Types of threats (verbal, written, or telephone):

- Veiled: Non-specific threats to the victim from the perpetrator, e.g., "I hope you don't have an accident" or "you better watch out"
- Conditional: Threats of violence to the victim by the perpetrator if the victim does or doesn't do something, e.g., "If you tell management, I'll punch you"
- Direct: Direct threats to the victim from the perpetrator, e.g. "I'll hurt you" or "I'll kill you".

Compliance

Compliance with this policy is mandatory and in accordance with all existing legislation, other employer policies and initiatives. Infractions will be considered to be misconduct and appropriate remedies will be imposed.

Part II: Preventing Workplace Violence

When a threat is made or a violent incident occurs, employee(s) report this to their supervisor, staff representative or safety committee member. The person who is contacted initiates the process.

A Threat Assessment Team (TAT) is assembled including:

- The Director
- Staff Representative
- Senior Supervisor
- A member of the safety committee

The Threat Assessment Team investigates the threat or violent incident with the supervisors of the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator and takes appropriate action.

Action taken can include the following:

- Verbal Warning
- Written warning
- Removal of the perpetrator from the premises
- Termination of employment
- Police Action (pressing charges, restraining orders)

Intentional false accusations of violent behavior will be treated as seriously as acts of violence.

Responsibilities

The following responsibilities are applicable in all instances.

Employee Responsibilities

- Work in a safe, healthy and non-violent way
- Report immediately all incidents of violence/threats
- Respect the confidentiality of proposed actions

Staff Representative Responsibilities

- Represent the employee interests to the employer
- Respect the confidentiality of employee information and proposed actions
- Defend contractual rights and obligations
- Provide guidance and interpretation
- Educate on the Preventing Workplace Violence Policy
- Bring threats and violent acts to the employer's attention

Employer Responsibilities

- Take the prescribed steps to prevent and protect against violence in the workplace as documented in the procedures.
- Respond to reported incidents
- Ensure employees can report threats or violence without fear of repercussion
- Respect the confidentiality of information and proposed actions
- Educate on the Preventing Work Place Violence Policy

Occupational Health and Safety Officer or Regional Safety Advisor

- Provide advice on safety-related issues
- Analyze safety implications of work place violence

Collective Responsibilities

- Respect confidentiality
(Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where the law requires reporting.)
- Be receptive
- Communicate
- Cooperate
- Provide accurate and timely information
- Collaborate to attain an agreeable solution
- Create and maintain a safe and healthy environment
- Notify the appropriate personnel of threats and violent acts

Threats and Minor Incidents

What to do with a Verbal Threat

1. Safety First

Don't Become A Victim

- Remain calm
- Make yourself safe

2. Diffuse Situational Tension

- Maintain physical distance
- Listen calmly
- Avoid sudden movements and hand gestures
- Speak calmly and slowly
- Do not argue

3. Secure Situation

- Ensure physical safety of others remaining in the area
- Use non-physical ways to separate alleged victim and alleged perpetrator, e.g., talking
- Assign individuals to assist with victim(s)
- Shut down operations, if required, at supervisor's discretion

4. Reporting and Investigating

Witness/Victim

- Inform supervisor or Threat Assessment Team member.
- Record immediately all information you can recall about the situation.

Supervisor

- Assemble TAT.

TAT and Supervisor

- Confirm event and gather basic information

- Call police if required
- Call the Employee Assistance Program if required
- Complete Incident Report form and open file
- Conduct formal investigation

5. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Supervisor and TAT to coordinate Critical Incident Stress Debriefing with Human Resources and EAP.

6. Incident Follow-up

TAT to develop an action plan, incorporating:

- Corrective action
- Preventative measures for future occurrences

Assault, Robbery or Extreme Violence

What to do

1. Safety First

Don't Become A Victim

- Get help
- Call 911 or equivalent
- Provide
 - location
 - your name and phone number
 - description of the situation
 - follow operator's instructions
- Remain calm
- Remove yourself and others immediately from harm by whatever means possible
- Find a safe hiding place if you can not leave
- Do not attempt to apprehend or restrain the individual

2. Diffuse Situational Tension

- Comply with perpetrator demands. Give them whatever they want (e.g., money, keys, documents)
- Maintain physical distance
- Avoid sudden movement and hand gestures
- Speak only when spoken to
- Speak calmly and slowly
- Do not argue

3. Secure Situation

- Ensure physical safety of others remaining in the area
- Quickly assess and secure disturbed work area
- Do not move or remove items within the disturbance site (evidence)
- Assign individuals to assist with victim(s)
- Shut down operations

4. Reporting and Investigating

Witness/Victim

- Inform supervisor or Threat Assessment Team member
- Record immediately all information you can recall about the situation

Supervisor

- Assemble TAT

TAT and Supervisor

- Confirm event and gather basic information
- Call Police
- Call Employee Assistance Program
- Complete Incident Report Form and open file
- Conduct formal investigation

5. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

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