

Working Alone

Working Alone - Off-site

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Who is at risk?

Precautions should be used when workers are alone and working away from a central location. Unexpected events in unfamiliar environments can increase the risk of violence to the worker. Occupations in this category include:

- Real estate agents
- Social workers
- Inspectors
- Enforcement officers
- Home care or health care workers
- Service or repair workers
- Sales people

What can the employer do?

In many situations, the nature of the off-site work involves a lone worker. It is important to conduct a risk assessment of the activities workers will do to keep them safe, even though they are working off-site and often working alone.

- Have a check-in procedure in place. See [Working Alone - General](#) for more information.
- Provide training and education on how to avoid potentially violent situations, as well as conflict resolution and de-escalation.
- Allow the use of a "buddy system" in high-risk situations - make sure workers know this option is available to them.

- Provide information on high-risk geographical areas to all staff.
 - Limit the time of day visits can be made to high-risk areas.
 - Keep client records and make sure staff are aware if a client is known to be aggressive, hostile, or potentially violent. Provide support when violence is possible (such as visiting the client as a team or having a way to quickly get assistance).
 - Prepare a daily work plan so everyone knows where and when workers are expected to be.
 - Encourage workers to share concerns and issues so that corrective actions can be implemented.
 - Provide a list of emergency contacts who are available and can provide support when needed.
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What are some tips for working off-site?

Tips for working off-site safely include:

Do:

- Arrange to meet clients in a 'safe' environment where others are present, such as a restaurant, hotel lobby, or office or workplace.
- Wear comfortable, professional clothing and practical shoes that will enable you to leave quickly if necessary.
- Always wear or carry your identification badge while on the job. It will show that you are acting in an official capacity and that you are a worker doing your job.
- Carry only what is necessary. Large or numerous bags or cases are cumbersome.
- Always take your cell phone with you and keep it in a place you can access quickly. Make sure that the phone has sufficient charge.
- Avoid having new work contacts walk you to your car.
- Be alert and make mental notes of your surroundings when you arrive at a new place.
- Maintain a 'reactionary gap' between yourself and the client (e.g., out of reach of the average person's kicking distance). Increase the gap by sitting across from each other at a table, if possible.
- If you are referring to written material, bring two copies so that you can sit across from the client, not beside.

- Ask a colleague or "buddy" to come with you if something makes you feel uneasy. Tell your supervisor about any feelings of discomfort or apprehension about an upcoming meeting.
- Keep records and indicate if the client or patient is known to be aggressive, hostile, or potentially violent. Do not leave out incidents that make you feel apprehensive.
- Check in regularly with your manager or a designated person.
- Leave the situation if you feel unsafe and report your concerns to your supervisor.

Do Not:

- Do not enter any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe.
- Do not carry weapons of any type, including pepper spray. Weapons can be easily used against you and are illegal in some jurisdictions.

(Adapted from CCOHS [Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide](#))

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