



**Policy Subject/Title:** Occupational Violence Prevention and Management Policy

**Policy Number:** HR/011

---

**Responsible Officer:** Chief Executive Officer

**Related Policies / Procedures:** HR/002 Workplace Health and Safety Policy  
F/005 Risk Management Policy  
P143 Incident Reporting and Recording Procedure  
P-076 Risk Assessment and Control Procedure  
Local Law No 1 – Administration

**Authorised by:** Somerset Regional Council

**Authorised on:** 11 July 2013

**Review / Amendment dates:** 27 July 2016 (Doc Id 898995)  
28 March 2018 (Doc Id 1024321)

## 1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to provide a corporate governance approach for zero tolerance to occupational violence.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Council workers may be subjected to occupational violence while performing their role.

Workers are at risk of being exposed to occupational violence particularly where there is face to face interaction with the public.

Occupational violence should not be considered as simply part of the job. Occupational violence is not acceptable, no matter how frequently or infrequently it occurs.

Occupational violence is defined as any threat or physical attack perpetrated by a member of the public against a worker during workplace activities.

Occupational violence is defined without consideration of the attacker's intent.

### ***Threat***

Threat means a statement (verbal) and behaviour that causes a reasonable person to believe they are in danger of being physically attacked.

### ***Physical Attack***

Physical attack means the direct or indirect application of force by a person to the body of, or to clothing or equipment worn by, another person where that application creates a risk to health and safety.

The definition covers situations where a worker is attacked by a person who may not be able to form intent, but who is capable of violence.

The term occupational violence applies to all forms of physical attacks on workers, including but not limited to:

- Striking, kicking, scratching, biting, spitting or any other type of direct physical contact;
- Throwing objects;
- Attacking with knives, guns, clubs or any other type of weapon;
- Pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing.

Council has a duty to provide and maintain a work environment without risk, as far as is reasonably practicable, to the health and safety of workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by Council.

A worker is any person who conducts work for Somerset Regional Council.

## 3. PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidance to workers on the processes and strategies to be employed when faced with occupational violence at the workplace.

#### **4. SCOPE**

This policy is intended for workers subjected to occupational violence while performing their work role within Somerset Regional Council operations.

#### **5. POLICY**

Council will not tolerate threats or physical attack against its workers and is committed to providing a safe workplace as stated in the Workplace Health and Safety Policy.

Council will take a zero tolerance approach to issues of occupational violence with predetermined responses to such behaviours in accordance with Council policies and procedures.

Council will respond appropriately to the nature and level of occupational violence on a case by case basis.

Where an occupational violence incident has occurred, predetermined responses may be applied. Predetermined responses include, but are not limited to:

- Termination of communication with the offender at that time;
- Forwarding of correspondence to the offender notifying the Council position on the matter;
- Provision of key zero tolerance messages at customer service areas, on the Council website and in public news forums;
- Liaising with Queensland Police in achieving appropriate recourse through the courts.

Appropriate information, training and supervision will be made available to all workers.

A worker has the right to withdraw to a safe location, and is advised to do so, if they believe their personal safety is at risk.

#### **6. CONTROLS**

##### **6.1 Community Awareness**

Council will promote community awareness on its zero tolerance approach to violent and/or aggressive behaviours towards its workers through internal and external marketing campaigns.

##### **6.2 Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

The effect of criminal behaviour at Council workplaces, where able, will be minimised through an environmental design process.

##### **6.3 Recruitment**

Applicants for some work roles may be required to undertake psychological assessment and criminal history checks in conjunction with standard recruitment procedures.

The need for any specific checks will be determined for identified roles by legislative requirement and / or consultation with relevant Directors.

#### **6.4 Induction**

At induction, all workers are to be made aware of the Occupational Violence Prevention and Management policy.

#### **6.5 Team Support**

To aid proactive outcomes to incidents of occupational violence in the workplace, team support is encouraged at all levels within Council.

Supervisory roles within Council are encouraged to foster empathic communication within groups and teams using the consultation process.

Regular team meetings will identify areas of concern with issues that cannot be managed within the confines of the team. Team supervisors are to take unresolved issues to Management for a risk managed solution.

#### **6.6 Incident Reporting**

Should a worker believe they are at risk of physical attack, or that their personnel safety is at risk as a result of occupation violence, Queensland Police should be notified immediately by phoning 000 for immediate emergency assistance during / immediately after an incident, or by making a report on the matter as soon as possible after the incident at the Local Police Station.

If reported to the Police, workers are to obtain a Police Report referral number (QP#).

All workers are required to report incidents of occupational violence as soon as possible to their Manager and / or Supervisor immediately after the situation has been resolved or contained.

Incidents are to be reported using Form F-545 in accordance with Incident Reporting and Recording procedure P-143.

Police report referral numbers (QP#) are to be included with the information provided on Form F-545.

#### **6.7 Notable Incidents Register**

Incident Report Forms F-545 notifying incidents of occupational violence against workers must be forwarded to the human resources section.

Reported incidents, and associated information, will be entered into a secure electronic database following approval by the Chief Executive Officer.

Workers will be able to access relevant data through rates display and mapping functions to pre-determine if a customer they are to provide service to has a known reported history of occupational violence.

Access to this information may allow proactive safe strategies to be determined before any face to face meetings occur.

The electronic database will be reviewed by the Human Resources section biannually.

#### **6.8 Incident Debriefing**

If practicable, a debrief meeting with all workers involved in an occupational violence incident will be conducted by the team Director on the day of the incident.

Minutes of the debrief meeting are to be documented as a case note with along with a

determination made at this debrief by those involved whether an incident investigation of the incident should be undertaken.

### **6.9 Incident Investigation**

Where a debrief resolves that an incident investigation is required, the investigation report is to recommend any additional controls that if implemented may eliminate or minimise future risk.

### **6.10 Counselling**

All workers involved in an occupational violence incident are to be offered access to Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Workers are not obliged to accept the offer.

### **6.11 Risk Assessment**

Risk assessments are to be undertaken in accordance with Somerset Regional Council procedure, P-076 Risk Assessment and Control.

The risk assessment should include a review of information pertaining to occupational violence against Council workers at Council workplaces including:

- Information from occupational violence incident reports generated using SRC Procedure P-143 Incident Reporting and Recording.
- Staff consultation case notes documented during post incident debriefing meetings.

The contributing risk factors below should be assessed to identify and prioritise risk management strategies.

- Work organisation and work flow deadlines
- Systems of work
- Service procedures
- Workplace design
- Staffing levels

Controls Measure identified during the risk assessment process must be communicated to all appropriate staff by the manager/supervisor to ensure a consistent approach to reducing the risk of harm.

Introduced controls should be monitored and evaluated for use and effectiveness.

### **6.12 Training**

Appropriate training of workers will be provided where identified as needed by either by a Risk Assessment or worker consultation process.

This training will be by either the provision of awareness training or specific training.

### **6.13 Awareness Training**

A training option available to all identified Council workers and provides understanding of Council's Customer Service Protocol of general information regarding the knowledge and skills required to effectively deal with people whether this be face to face contact or via the telephone.

**6.14 Specific Training**

Specific training is a training option available to identified Council workers.

Specific training is designed to provide a full range of appropriate personal safety skills to prevent, avoid and defuse aggressive and threatening behaviour.

Training in dealing with difficult people is one option with more specific training able to be sourced.

Requests for training are made through the completion of a training request form. Training that is supported by your immediate Manager will be provided as soon as it can be sourced and scheduled.

**7. DATE OF RESOLUTION**

This policy was approved by the Chief Executive Officer and adopted by the Somerset Regional Council at the Ordinary Meeting of 27 July 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Bai', is positioned above the 'Signed:' label.

Signed:

Date: 27 July 2016