

Keep Women from Dying from Domestic Violence at Work



When many people think about domestic violence, they consider it something that happens behind closed doors at home. But more and more often, domestic violence is impacting the workplace—endangering both the targeted worker and her co-workers. And far too often, the results are tragic. Just look at the results of a recent US study.

US Domestic Violence Study

The [study](#) by researchers from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Injury Control Research Center at West Virginia University (WVU-ICRC) found that “intimate partner” violence resulted in 142 homicides among women at work in the US from 2003 to 2008, which represents 22% of the 648 workplace homicides among women during the period.

The paper, “Workplace homicides among U.S. women: the role of intimate partner violence,” which was published in the April 2012 issue of *Annals of Epidemiology*, notes the risk factors associated with workplace-related intimate partner homicides include occupation, time of day and location.

Although women in protective service occupations had the highest overall homicide rate, those in healthcare, production and office/administration had the highest proportion of homicides related to intimate partner violence. And over half of the homicides committed by intimate partners occurred in

parking lots and public buildings.

The study also found that more US women died on the job as the result of domestic violence than at the hands of a client—such as a student, patient or prisoner—or of a current or former co-worker.

Domestic Violence & OHS Law

So far only two Canadian jurisdictions have taken a firm stand on domestic violence and workplace safety: BC and Ontario.

Ontario added a domestic violence provision to the [OHS Act](#) in its new workplace violence and harassment requirements in direct response to the 2005 murder of Lori Dupont, a nurse, by her ex-boyfriend, a doctor at the Ontario hospital where she worked.

Under the new regulation, employers in Ontario must take reasonable precautions to protect workers if they become aware, or should reasonably be aware, that domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace. These requirements have been in effect since June 2011.

In March, WorkSafeBC released the [Domestic Violence in the Workplace Tool Kit](#), which provides:

- Advice on how to recognize the signs that workers may be affected by domestic violence
- Information about employers' legal obligations
- Strategies to help avoid situations where domestic violence could affect the safety of workers and the workplace.

OHS Insider Resources

Safety professionals are clearly concerned about domestic violence's impact on the workplace. For example, in a recent OHS Insider poll on the kinds of violence you're most worried

about in your workplace, 29% said you were concerned about domestic violence that spills over into the workplace.

To help you address domestic violence in your workplace, the OHS Insider has several resources, including:

- A [recorded webinar](#) on domestic violence in the workplace
- A [model workplace domestic violence policy](#)
- A [safety talk](#) on speaking to a co-worker about domestic violence.