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Dealing with people

As you go about your work you may be at risk from attack or abuse, particularly when you are on your own. No policy or precautions can guarantee your safety in every situation, but you can reduce the risks.

Reduce the risk of assault

Walk, talk and behave with people in a confident way, but don't appear arrogant. You are then less likely to be attacked.

Be prepared and keep in touch.

- Know where you are going, and how to get there.
- Tell someone where you are going, when you will be back, and if your arrangements change.
- Make various checks before you leave. See **P...Prepare** on page 23.

Trust your instincts.

- Be aware of potential hazards, and work out how you will deal with them.
- If you feel scared or uneasy, take action immediately, for example get out of the room, lift or building. You don't have to make excuses.

Report immediately any aggressive or abusive behaviour you experience.

Communicate.

- Talk your way out of problems - calm the other person rather than provoke them.
- Speak confidently, gently, slowly and clearly.
- Don't show stress or fear in your voice or manner.

Show respect.

- Don't stand too close to, or touch, anyone you work with or deal with.
- Always show your identity card or an official document when visiting.

In real danger, take action.

- Don't freeze. Breathe out to release tension.
- Get away fast, and don't look back.

If you can't get away.

- Shout or scream something positive like **Phone the Police!** which people will take seriously and respond to quickly.
- Use a personal alarm to shock or confuse the person attacking or abusing you.

Dealing with abusive or aggressive people

Aggression can take various forms: verbal abuse, racial or sexual harassment, bullying or discrimination. Whatever it is, it can be very upsetting. You can control it or limit it by adopting effective responses.

Be prepared.

- Check on your customer database if there are any previous reports of abusive behaviour.
- If possible, assess the situation beforehand and have a colleague standing by to help.
- Find out if there are any panic buttons, and how you can get out of the room easily.

Make sure you have an escape route.

- Assess how you could escape or summon help if the situation gets worse.
- Try to prevent the person blocking your escape route.
- Never turn your back - always move backwards or sideways.

Don't react.

- Do not respond in the same way to the person.
- Stay calm. Breathe slowly to control your own tension.
- Don't argue or try to outsmart the person.

Talk through the problem.

- Suggest things they could do immediately, for example sit down, go into another room, go for a walk or talk with another person.
- Negotiate a way of taking a break.
- Be prepared to meet them halfway or offer them ways out of the situation. You may need to compromise.

Adopt non-threatening behaviour.

- Put yourself in a position where it is difficult for the person to confront you, for example stand next to them rather than in front. Try to get them to sit down and sit at the same level.
- Speak gently, slowly and clearly.
- Avoid gestures or postures that the person could think of as aggressive or patronising, for example hands on hips or folded arms.
- Focus their attention on something else rather than you, for example a leaflet or letter.
- Keep your distance - do not touch the person.

Lifting and carrying

Lifting and carrying can cause back problems! Only lift things if you can handle them easily. If a load is too big, too heavy or too awkward, find some other way of moving it. Your employer should give you training on how to lift properly.

Before you start

Always plan your task first and if any of the following poses a problem, don't do it!

- Do you really have to move it?
- Are there any pieces of equipment you could use, for example a barrow, trolley or hoist?
- Do you need someone else to help you?
- How heavy is it? Can the load be split and carried in more than one trip?
- What shape is it? Does it have sharp edges?
- Is the load secure or likely to fall to pieces?
- Can you get at the object?
- Can you get any handholds on it?
- Will you be able to see where you are going?
- Are there any other obstructions, for example doors or steps?
- What are you going to do with it when you get there?

Using equipment for lifting or moving

- Take time to plan your task safely.
- It is safer and easier to use machinery to lift or move heavy loads but only do this if you have been trained to use the equipment.
- Make sure the equipment is suitable for the job you are doing. It is safer to buy or hire the right equipment than to make do with something that is dangerous or unsuitable.
- Take care when using sack trolleys or hand carts not to overload them, especially when steering over rough ground.
- Report any equipment which is not safe or is damaged. Be responsible and do not leave it for someone else to discover.

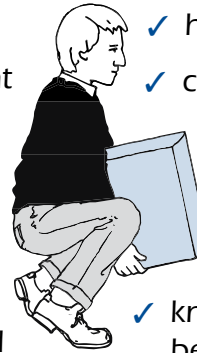
The lifting and carrying rules

Follow these basic rules whatever the shape and size of your load.

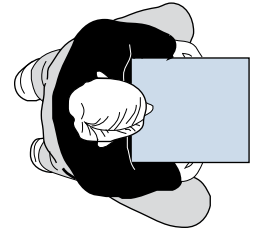
- Plan your route before you start.
- Check whether a risk assessment has already been done for this task. If so, follow the recommendations.
- Adopt a good position.
- Get a firm grip:
 - keep the heaviest side against your body
 - keep your arms within the boundary formed by your legs.
- Lift smoothly - don't jerk.
- Move smoothly, keeping to the correct posture. Don't twist and keep the load close to your body.
- Put the load down smoothly, keeping to the correct posture.
- Slide the load into position so that it is secure in its final position.

1

- ✓ back straight but inclined forward
- ✓ feet shoulder width apart, one foot slightly forward



- ✓ head up
- ✓ chin up
- ✓ arms close to body
- ✓ knees slightly bent (not fully)



2

- ✓ don't block your vision
- ✓ keep the load close
- ✓ keep your arms tucked in
- ✓ don't change your grip



3

- ✓ place the load, then slide it
- ✓ be careful with fingers
- ✓ bend your knees

