

Joint Statement on Violence, Harassment and Abuse

Everyone has a right to work in an environment where they feel safe and respected, free from violence, harassment and abuse.

We, the industry's unions and employers, are therefore worried by reports that electricity industry workers face rising violence from members of the public.

We will not tolerate negative behaviour, acts of aggression or threats made against workers while carrying out their duties.

We recognise this is an issue that not only undermines individuals' health and dignity, but also has a real economic impact on companies in terms of absence from the workplace, morale and staff turnover.

Stakeholders of the National Health and Safety Committee, namely the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and Energy UK member companies, and the industry trade unions (GMB, Prospect, Unison and Unite), commit to working together to ensure that, as far as possible, all staff can work in a safe environment, free from violence, harassment and abuse. Over the coming months, we will jointly develop new resources and processes for the industry to keep people safe.

While responsibility for an act of violence sits primarily with the perpetrator, employers have an important role to play in keeping you safe and providing you with support, and there are steps you can take to keep yourself safe.

You should report all incidents of violence, harassment and abuse, even if you feel it may not warrant reporting. It will be taken seriously and you will be treated with dignity and fairness, and not victimised, belittled or treated less favourably as a result.

If you ever feel in danger, stop the job and retreat to somewhere safe. Do not put yourself or others at risk.

Your employer will:

- Ensure you know what steps to take if you face violence from a third party whilst at work;
- Provide you with access to support and ensure you know what services are available to you – such as physical and mental health support – should you ever need it;
- Endorse that violence and abuse towards workers will not be tolerated;
- Consult staff representatives about violence from third parties and the measures needed to address it;
- Jointly develop robust policies, procedures and methods to reduce the chance of staff becoming victims of violence and any consequences if they do;
- Provide training for managers and supervisors to ensure they know how to provide staff with support;
- Encourage employees to report incidents of violence, harassment and abuse – no matter how minor they feel it could be; and
- Collect and monitor data on incidents involving violence, harassment and abuse and, where necessary, carry out investigations so that lessons can be learnt.

What you can do?

As well as generally taking care of yourself and your colleagues, there are things you can do to avoid violence at work. You should:

- Stop work and leave the area, or retreat to somewhere safe, if you feel you might be in danger.
- Keep in regular contact with your colleagues and line manager.
- Remember and follow your training
- Report any incidents or events involving threats, violence or aggression to your line manager/employer (so they can support you and improve health and safety) and the emergency services where relevant; and
- Speak to your union rep about any concerns you have.

What is work-related violence?

The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related violence as: “Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.”

This includes:

- verbal abuse – shouting, swearing or insults, sexual harassment or other unwanted advances/behaviour, and racial abuse;
- threats and intimidation – from customers/patrons;
- physical violence – physical attacks including a slap, kicking, spitting or shoving as well as more extreme violence.

The behaviour can happen in person, online or over the phone, and it can happen on your way to and from work.

“Everyone in the Electricity Networks Sector has a right to work in an environment where they feel safe, respected and free from violence, harassment and abuse.”

