

4.3. Dealing with internal hazards through environmental design

One way of minimising the risks posed by violent and aggressive conduct is to consider the environmental design or layout of your premises. The concept of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) suggests that certain building design features can discourage violent or criminal activity. It is based on the idea that if you enhance certain design features within your office you can discourage violence – particularly by considering space, layout and psychology concepts such as the behaviour of people in relation to colour, lighting, temperature and queuing. Some examples of CPTED strategies that might discourage unreasonable conduct include:

- Using building security if available or station employed security guards at entry points that are visible to complainants. This can be full or part-time, with the guards only present when particular people attend the office.
- Increasing the number of staff around the office at high-risk times.
- Separating the access points to the building, different floors of the building or lifts for staff and the public.
- Clearly differentiating between public and employee space by using different carpet, tiles, etc.
- Requiring visitors to identify themselves and sign in and out of the workplace.
- Having closed circuit television – this has been proven to have a deterrent effect, particularly when there are obvious monitors so people can see themselves being recorded.
- Prominently posting signs that you are video monitoring.
- Prominently posting signs setting out expected behaviours of visitors.
- Having wider and/or higher front counters that make it more difficult for a person to reach across, jump over etc.
- Making sure that objects are fixed and cannot be used as projectiles.
- Having designated safe rooms where staff can gather if a threat arises.
- Installing double exit doors in interview rooms.
- Having shatterproof glass in interview rooms and public areas of the office.
- Controlling public access to interview rooms and non-public areas of the office – for example, needing key card access to enter.
- Having minimal furniture in public areas and furniture that is large enough that it cannot be easily picked up and thrown.
- Minimising the number of entrances to the workplace, while maintaining fire code regulations.
- Installing metal detectors at building entrances – depending on the nature of the services provided.
- Fitting duress alarms to walls or desks or having staff wear them during interviews – these alarms can be silent internally but with a link to computers that raise automatic emergency responses.

- Having a planned approach to queuing – such as taking a number or setting out a clearly defined queuing area.
- Making sure waiting rooms are comfortable and spacious and there is adequate seating – to minimise discomfort.
- Making sure that there are proper ventilation and temperature controls.
- If complainants will be waiting for extended periods of time, having televisions and/ or reading materials in the waiting area that are suitable for them – but do try to minimise waiting.
- Make sure that there is adequate lighting in car parks surrounding the workplace.
- Using relaxing music and calm colours in paintwork to reduce potential violence.
- Ensuring that all or certain visitors are escorted when in non-public areas.
- Installing airphones to allow what is happening in a public area throughout the office.

The suitability of these strategies will depend on the type of services your office or organisation provides.