

# Safety and health alert

## 17/94 Serious injury - work related stress

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### Incident

Forty year old female nurse developed work related stress following a patient displaying violent and threatening behaviour during a night shift.

### Factors

- Increase in the use of low level aggression and violence within the community.
- Unsafe system of work.
- Failure to inform the employee of the patient's past history of aggressive behavior.
- Lack of appropriate work place policies and procedures dealing with patient violence, aggression and abuse.
- Inadequate information, instruction and training provided to employees on how to prevent and handle such situations.

### Recommendations

1. Ensure patient case notes are used to inform employees about potential aggressive or violent behavior of patients and provide them with sufficient instruction on the management of such patients.
2. Develop in consultation with health and safety representatives and employees a policy on violence in the workplace that addresses all potential situations they may face.
3. Develop in consultation with health and safety representatives and employees procedures that detail the employer's expectations of how an employee can safely behave and respond if involved in a violent, aggressive, or abusive incident.
4. Undertake in consultation the identification of employees at risk; potential sources of violence, aggression or abuse; assessment of the risks; identification of priorities; and the development of prevention and risk control strategies.
5. Provide information, instruction and training to all employees exposed to the hazard of patient violence, aggression and abuse, including how to recognise potential situations and how to manage them.

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

