



Late- Night Working

Preventing Violence to Staff

Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*

www.usdaw.org.uk

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Preventing Violence to Staff

Violent crime continues to increase. Shopworkers are on the frontline. British Retail Consortium figures show that one shopworker is attacked or threatened every minute of the shopping day.

Extended trading hours have increased the exposure to risk. Reduced staffing levels for late-night trading and problems with drunken customers make things even worse.

Opening and closing of the store are identified as particularly risky times from reports of incidents that have happened. Closing a store late at night is much worse than closing in the early evening. It also means that night shift staff such as shelf fillers have to travel to or from work at later hours when access to public transport or even use of their own cars may be more risky.

24 hour operation of petrol filling stations, often with single staffing, is a further area where the risk is greater, particularly where the petrol station attendant is required to sell other goods apart from petrol.

Women workers feel particularly vulnerable and the stress that this can cause can itself be a problem even if they are not a victim of an attack.

Staff who are keyholders who are called out in the middle of the night if the store alarm has gone off also feel particularly vulnerable, especially if they are expected to enter the premises on their own.

Usdaw members in the *Firing*

Usdaw members are all too often victims of violence. Here are some examples of typical incidents, some of which have

Bristol

At several stores many reports of verbal abuse, physical assault, including three armed robberies. Worst time for incidents was between 8pm and 10pm.

Swansea

Knife, gun and arson attacks and intimidation by gangs of youths when closing up late at night. Workers frightened when waiting for buses late at night or where public transport is not available. Fewer staff on duty during late night trading when incidence of shoplifting and vandalism is more common.

North Wales

Assault in store car park led to the following measures: Car park lights to be left on all night, bushes and shrubs cleared away, system of escorting staff to their cars when leaving store at night, offering staff personal attack alarms at £5 each.

Enfield

24 hour petrol station staff having to deal with abusive and aggressive customers. Kiosks being kept open till midnight to maximise sales. Staff having to walk alone across the car park to collect stock during the night. CCTV only being provided where there is concern about theft rather than staff safety.

Home g Line

ence in the workplace. Here are a few
ve resulted in improved security measures.

Leeds

Abusive language, bottles being thrown and threats of being 'waited for' when leaving store. Staff arranged lifts home together. Management allowed parking in yard at back of store, which is poorly lit. Problems worst between 7.30pm – 8pm. Abuse from drug users and solvent sniffers. Earlier incidents about 4pm involving shoplifters. All late staff live within walking distance and no transport provided. CCTV and panic buttons fitted.

Glasgow

Following a number of violent incidents after extension of trading to 10pm the company has laid on transport home for staff.

Swindon

Armed robbery at petrol filling station by masked man with 10" knife.

Manchester

A member turns up for work at 4am and has to wait outside the store for Night Manager to let her in. A member working alone at night in a petrol filling station was threatened by two men wielding machetes.

Reducing the risk

- Employers should ensure that they have a system for reporting all incidents including threats or intimidation and incidents which are work related but happen outside of work (for example, when travelling to or from work).
- Retailing employer's risk assessments, required under health and safety law, should cover the issue of violence and, where late working causes particular problems the risk assessment should recognise this.
- Employers should provide well lit access to stores for staff who are opening or closing or who have to enter or leave the store during the night.
- Car parks should be well lit at all times that staff are expected to use them. Where possible night staff should be allowed to park where there is easy access to the store and where their cars can be monitored by security staff. Bushes, shrubs and other obstructions which may provide a hiding place for assailants should be removed.
- If there are problems with public transport for night staff or staff who finish late then the employer should lay on transport.
- In high risk areas, arrangements should be made to make sure that individual workers are not expected to open or close stores on their own. Staff who have to leave the store during the night should be escorted to their transport home. Staff who are expected to open/close stores should be trained so they know what to do if they see someone suspicious hanging about.
- Where possible, staff should not be expected to work on their own at high risk times, for example, in late opening stores, off licences or petrol filling stations. If it cannot be avoided then extra precautions will be needed to make sure that they are protected and can call for assistance in an emergency.
- Staff who are keyholders should be trained in what to do in a call-out and should not be expected to enter the store on their own.

What the Union can do

- Where the Union is recognised, we can use the legal powers given to Usdaw Health and Safety Reps to raise the issue with the employer and to negotiate for improvements like the ones suggested in this leaflet to make work safer for our members.
- The Union can also help members who are attacked to claim compensation. To start a claim members should call the **FREE** accident claim line FirstCall Usdaw on 0800 055 6333.

Join Usdaw – together we can make the workplace safer!

For further information or to join Usdaw ring the Union helpline

0845 60 60 640

visit the Usdaw website

www.usdaw.org.uk

write to the Union's Central Office.

Just write **FREEPOST USDRAW**

on the envelope and put it in the post

www.usdaw.org.uk/freedomfromfear



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Free Accident Claim Line

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**Improving workers' lives
– Winning for members**

