

Occupational violence psychological and physical trauma

Who is impacted

OV typically impacts multiple people - those directly involved in the incident as well as witnesses, resulting in varying degrees of physical or psychological trauma (injury or illness). OV can also impact the people who respond to and/or provide support after the event. Understanding the full context of an OV incident is important when recognising the impact, the OV incident has had on those involved.

How trauma may manifest

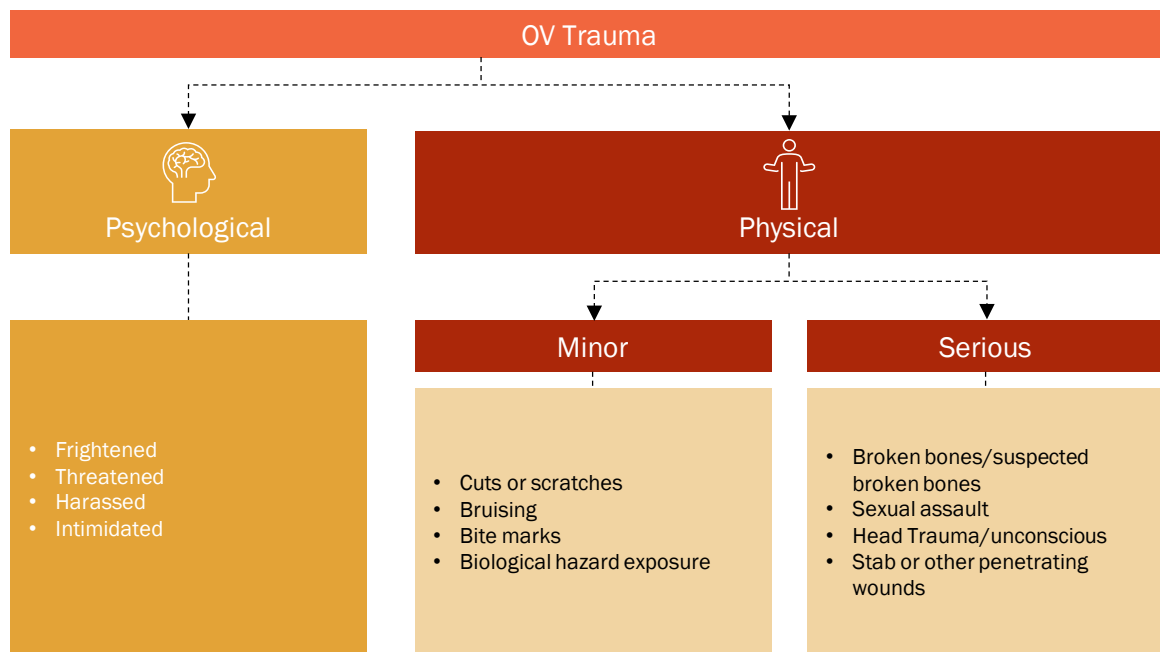
The impacts of OV on the worker may be immediately recognisable or may manifest over a period of time. This occurs when workers process the OV incident and manage their physical or psychological trauma (injury or illness). Workers who are exposed to OV on a regular basis or because of a repeated behaviour or action, or indirect trauma (injury or illness), may not manifest any immediately recognisable responses. Instead, they may have a deterioration in their health and wellbeing over time. Their response may be delayed, take longer to present, or appear to be disproportionate to the incident.

How trauma may present

Occupational violence incidents can result in direct or indirect psychological or physical trauma (injury or illness) to workers and/or consumers.

Trauma also includes any physical or psychological harm that a person incurs in the process of responding to or avoiding OV such as slipping, tripping and/or falling. This may include musculoskeletal injuries from direct trauma, injury, stretching, twisting or because of maintaining a static posture for a length of time.

Types of direct trauma (injury or illness)



Indirect trauma (injury or illness)

Indirect trauma (injury or illness), also known as vicarious trauma, typically occurs when an individual is exposed to a traumatic event by observing or hearing about an incident and they are personally affected by the emotions and/or experience of the injured person. Managers and workers may experience indirect trauma (injury or illness) if they provide support to people who have been impacted by OV, especially if the person who is affected is unable, or chooses not, to limit the information they share about the incident (for example in a debriefing situation).

What support is required

All workers who have experienced OV should be assessed for both physical and psychological trauma (injury or illness).

Every worker will have a unique experience and response to an OV incident. Therefore, when assessing response and support requirements, managers must assess and respond to both the incident and the affected worker. The worker may require several different support options including access to treatment, workplace supports such as modified duties and/or time away from the workplace.

As required, they should be supported with psychological first aid, referral to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, and provided details for available support services. Physical trauma (injury or illness) from OV typically requires some level of medical treatment. Determining the most suitable treatment will depend on:

- the nature and severity of the trauma (injury or illness)
- services available
- location of the injured individual (onsite or offsite).

Treatment options

The following outlines suggested management of a physical injury +/- psychological injury.

Type	Location	Treatment options
Psychological injury	Onsite or	A. Provide support and psychological first aid as required. B. Refer to the Supporting workers wellbeing Factsheet and Psychological first aid Factsheet .
	Offsite	
Physical: minor injury	Onsite	A. Apply first aid as appropriate/engage with the appropriate health practitioner for application of first aid. B. Engage required medical team if more than first aid is required C. Transfer the individual to the necessary department (if required).
	Offsite	A. Coordinate with the affected workers to self-administer or seek assistance to administer first aid. B. Worker or manager to engage emergency Ambulance service - Dial 000.
Physical: serious injury	Onsite	A. Engage or transfer to site-specific emergency services/team as required. B. If no site-specific emergency services onsite Dial 000 to engage the Ambulance Service.
	Offsite	A. workers or manager to engage emergency Ambulance service – Dial 000.

- Advise any transfer, medical or emergency team of all known details including any required safety precautions.
- For any OV incident where there is potential for ACT Policing engagement, managers may be required to take photos of any injuries that have been sustained.
- For any OV Incident where there is a serious injury, refer to the [WorkSafe ACT](#) requirements for notification obligations.

ACT Policing advise that OV incidents that result in physical assault, sexual assault and/or threats to harm someone should be reported to and managed by ACT Policing. Call 000 if an emergency or life threatening. Call 131 444 for police assistance.

In most cases the OV victim decides whether to provide a statement with ACT Policing. However, Police are legally obliged to investigate any known or suspected domestic and/or family violence related incident.

OV incidents that result in serious injury or death are typically a WorkSafe ACT notifiable event.

OV incidents that require notification to WorkSafe ACT

- the death of a person, a serious injury or illness of a person, a dangerous incident

A serious injury or illness includes:

- an injury or illness that requires immediate treatment in hospital as an inpatient in a hospital
- amputation, serious head, eye or burn injury, degloving or scalping, spinal injury, loss of bodily function, serious laceration, exposure to a substance which requires medical treatment within 48 hours

For more details, refer to the WorkSafe website: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/>

More details in ⇒ **Safety response Factsheet**

⇒ **Police engagement Factsheet**

⇒ **Supporting workers wellbeing Factsheet**

⇒ **Psychological first aid Factsheet**

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra