

Online abuse in the workplace

Information for workers /



This fact sheet provides information for workers on rights and duties under work health and safety (WHS) laws and what to do if you experience online abuse in the workplace.

What can I do if I experience online abuse at work?

Your employer should provide you with information and training about how to respond if you are experiencing online abuse at work, and how to report it.

Depending on the type of abuse and how it is occurring, you may choose to do one or more of the following, if you feel safe and comfortable doing so:

- **Ask for it to stop.** You may be able to resolve a situation before it escalates by pointing out that the behaviour is inappropriate and makes you feel unsafe and asking that it stop.
- **Remove yourself from the situation.** Disconnect the call or use tools on social media or the device to block, hide or remove abusive content (see below point about collecting evidence).
- **Ask for help.** Seek support from your designated staff representative, other workers, your manager or human resources area.
- **Report abusive content.** You should report any abusive content to your employer. You can also report harmful online content to the social media company and to eSafety – [eSafety](#) provides advice on how you can do this.

What is online abuse?

Online abuse is behaviour that uses technology to threaten, intimidate, bully, harass or humiliate someone.

Online abuse is never acceptable and should never be considered as part of doing your job.

It can take place via online platforms (social media, online chat and messaging services), telephone (calls and text messages), email or other technology used in workplaces.

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After an incident, you can:

- **Seek support** from a colleague, helpline, counselling service or employee representative such as a health and safety representative (HSRs). A list of [support services can be found on our website](#).
- **Keep a record**, include what happened, who, when, where and anything else you think may be important. Collect evidence through screenshots, voicemails and digital records – eSafety provides advice on how you can [collect evidence](#).
- **Report what happened** to a supervisor, human resources area or the person designated by your organisation. Reporting abusive behaviour early can help make it stop and prevent it from escalating. Your employer should have workplace policies or procedures in place on how to report incidents, how incidents will be dealt with and the support services available to you. You can also report harmful online content to the social media company and to [eSafety](#).
- You can also [contact eSafety](#) for general advice and guidance. eSafety's [responding to cyber abuse guide](#) provides a visual breakdown of proactive strategies to take if you encounter various forms of online abuse, as well as [tips on how to build your psychological armour online](#).
- At any time, you can **contact your WHS regulator** for further advice.

If you are in immediate danger call triple zero (000).

If you feel unsafe, frightened, or receive threats to harm you or someone else, you may wish to contact the Police. If you experience serious online abuse - see the eSafety website for more information about [getting help from the Police](#).

Remember, you have a right to feel safe at work. It is illegal for you to be disadvantaged because you have reported abuse - if you are, you can seek help from the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

You should raise any concerns you have about health and safety, including online abuse, with your employer. You can also raise WHS issues with your health and safety representative (HSR) or union. Your employer cannot discriminate against or disadvantage you for raising WHS concerns.