



5 Minute Safety Talk - 1

## Introduction to Respectful Workplaces

Today's talk has nothing to do with risk of physical injury, such as from falling from a ledge, being hit by a dolly or crashing a vehicle. Today we are talking about protection from psychological harm due to harassment and bully in the workplace.

What do we mean when we talk about harassment and bullying?

In a nutshell, it's behaviour that humiliates or intimidates. In the workplace, we are talking about a pattern of actions that someone aims at a worker, that affects the worker's ability to get their work done.

Here are some examples of harassing behaviour:

- Verbal aggression or name-calling
- Vandalizing personal belongings
- Sabotaging work
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Humiliating initiation practices (sometimes known as hazing)
- Personal attacks
- Gestures that are aggressive, threatening or sexual in nature
- Cyber-bullying

Some forms of harassment “pick on” something about the person's identity, such as their sex, gender identity, their sexual orientation, their race, or their size. In our industry, harassing behaviour aimed at women workers is often sexualized. And there is still a lot of it going on! Sexual harassment may take the form of:

- Personal attacks or gestures of a sexual nature;
- Sharing, display or use of sexualized images or language; or
- Inappropriate sexual touching or advances





We are talking about behaviour that may come from co-workers, supervisors, employers or external sources.

To be defined as harassment, usually we mean a course of inappropriate actions rather than a single incident. However, a single occurrence may qualify as harassment, depending on how severe it is. Obviously, a single act of assault is very serious and may become a police matter.

The rule of thumb is pretty simple: is the behaviour unwelcome? And would we expect that the person behaving in this way knows, or ought to know, that the actions are unwelcome? If so, it's harassment.

Workplace harassment in our industry is now being recognized as the hazard it is, and we all need to learn to recognize it and keep it out of our sets and offices.

So, the first thing to know about harassment is that it is still too common in the film, TV and digital media industry. In the past it has been almost an accepted part of our culture.

The second thing to know is that harassing someone is not just a violation of the new industry Code of Conduct, it is actually **ILLEGAL**. All across Canada, labour law and human rights legislation has been beefed up over the last few years to tackle harassment. It is now illegal under labour laws, human rights codes and health and safety regulations to harass a worker, even people like us who are mainly self-employed.

Giving someone a hard time at work is really a way of showing someone who's boss, or who's on top, or who is not welcome on the job. It is an abuse of power. And in our industry, it has not been easy to speak up to stop it when someone is bullying you.



We are all aware that the job we are on today is only short-term, and we compete for that next job. Most of us face precarious employment throughout our careers. No one wants to be thought of as a complainer or a problem, and fear of being labelled has stopped people from coming forward with complaints when they are bullied or harassed.

This is what we are changing. Harassment is NOT acceptable. The production company actually has the **legal responsibility** to keep us safe at work, and that includes keeping the set, and the office, free from violence and harassment. Most of the unions, guilds and employer-side organizations across the country have gotten together over 2018 to develop an industry-wide Code of Conduct, and make sure policies and practices are in place to ensure respectful workplaces.

The industry is listening up now. People in our industry who act as supervisors and managers are getting trained on how to spot harassment, what makes a respectful workplace, and what to do when complaints come forward.

Unions and guilds are also making sure their staff and leaders know how to handle harassment and bullying allegations, and what they can do to ensure due process for members who are accused, and how to prevent reprisals and provide support for members who bring forward complaints.

We all have a responsibility to behave respectfully toward one another in our work environment, which can be very stressful at times. If you experience harassment, the best thing to do is to talk to the person who's acting disrespectfully, away from the general crew, and let them know the behaviour is unwelcome. You may choose to do this on your own if you feel comfortable doing so or bring a co-worker with you. If this is not safe, raise the matter with your manager and your union representative. Keep good notes about the incident or incidents.

We will talk about this topic again in other safety talks. In the meantime, talk to your union or guild rep if you have questions or concerns.

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