



SAFETY OF WOMEN AT THE WORKPLACE

Recommendations for Businesses

RECOMMENDATIONS BY

FICCI & FLO INDUSTRY TASK FORCE ON SAFETY OF WOMEN AT WORK PLACE

Background

FICCI and FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) are committed towards the inclusion of women's talents, skills, experience and energies across all sectors and levels of economic activity. However, for creating gender equality through empowerment, safety and well-being of women is also crucial and fundamental. In the wake of increasing incidents of violence and atrocities against women, FICCI and FLO felt the need to set up an Industry Task Force that would come out with recommendations to ensure safety of women in our society and work places. The FICCI-FLO Task Force was set up on December 24, 2012. The members of the Task Force are attached as Annex.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, workplace has become a much more diverse environment. With women representing 24.4 per cent of the total workforce in India, personal security has become central to their physical, intellectual, emotional, economic and spiritual well-being.

To quote Michelle Bachelet, first woman Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General, "Gender equality must become a lived reality" and how better to do it than ensure that women are safe at the workplace, by creating an atmosphere conducive to increased participation of women, positively encouraging and supporting them.

The suggested guidelines for the safety for women at the workplace are broadly categorized under four heads:

1. Physical
2. Environmental
3. Organizational
4. Educational

Each of the above heads has recommendations which are required and aspirational.

Physical

This focuses on the physical security of women employees in an organization. It ascertains the safety of female employees, whilst they are on the job/ inside office premises – the workplace needs to be secure and women assured of basic safety on the job and in office.

Minimum Requirements

- Identification documents (driving license, photo ID, address proof, Finger prints) to be collected from drivers, security guards and all casual staff
- 24x7 operational CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) cameras at vital locations or places, such as entry/ exit, common passages, etc in the factories and industries. However, this should not impinge the modesty and privacy of the employees
- Where CCTV is not possible, manned entries/ gates and security deployment at the site/ office/ location 24x7 or depending upon the kind of working hours

Aspirational Recommendations

- Installation of electronic doors allowing access to the work area only to authorized employees / staff
- High security fencing to discourage human trespassing in factory/office premises or campuses
- Security guard or a colleague to accompany the driver in the cab, if a woman staff working in a night shift is either the first to be picked up or last to be dropped
- GPS based monitoring of cabs/transport vehicles with panic buttons
- SMS Alerts / Information Systems to be designed/installed
- A thorough risk assessment of the neighboring area is recommended to ascertain that stringent measures are in place to mitigate any security risk

- Mobile Applications to be installed on employee phones for increased tracking and safety measures

Environmental

The environmental aspect complements the physical aspect of security and helps maintain a safe and secure standard in any premises. This plays a vital role in ensuring the basic yet critical aspects of safety of employees.

Minimum Requirement

- Clearly displayed emergency contact numbers and a designated officer(s) available round the clock to be contacted in emergency
- Well lit work areas, staircases and parking lots till the last woman employee leaves the site
- Separate and secure toilets for women close to their work station
- Strict surveillance of visitors. Details of all the visitors such as name, organization, address, purpose of visit, person visited, time in and time out to be recorded in a register. This should apply not only to the visitors coming for business purposes but also to courier staff, delivery boys etc
- Provision of company transport for women working in night shifts both to and from the workplace
- Hiring of cabs/ transport vehicles on a regular basis only from established agencies

Aspirational Recommendations

- Security staff and drivers to be employed only after police verification or to be recruited from reputed agencies that have such measures in place
- Compliance and Audits / Random Checks / Patrolling to be done periodically including breath analysis of cab drivers

- 24x7 transport helpdesk for drivers & staff / family members with dedicated emergency cab on standby for exigencies
- Emergency Response Systems to record and support any emergencies across group of employees
- Tracking of Ad-Hoc and No-Show staff transport users to drive more discipline in transport usage

Organizational

It is for the employer to create a positive atmosphere at the workplace where a woman is encouraged to come to work, secure in the knowledge that she will be treated with dignity, respect and will be protected from harassment.

Minimum Requirement

- At the time of orientation, women in organizations to be made aware of their rights, facilities and actions that they can initiate regarding sexual harassment
- To have a Code of Conduct agreement in place - to be affirmed annually by employees and vendors with clear defining behavioural norms especially for males with female employees
- Internal compliance measurement on the awareness of the policy
- Payment of salaries directly into bank accounts to avoid any kind of harassment by supervisory staff over subordinate women employees/casual women employees
- Setting up of a sexual harassment committee reporting to the Managing Director or a senior member of the management and headed by a woman
- Strict disciplinary action against those found violating the code of conduct to ensure that it is not repeated
- Organizations with pan-India presence to have regional heads as members of the committee

- The majority or at least two women to be on the committee, one from the staff and one from management
- Every office to have a representative reporting to the committee
- Every complaint verbal or written to be documented and investigated promptly by the committee and appropriate action must be taken irrespective of the person being a senior, supervisor, colleague, staff, customer or vendor
- Smaller organizations to be made to appoint an external sexual harassment committee
- Women employees to be assured of speedy redressal, confidentiality of their complaints and protection from reprisal

Aspirational Recommendations

- Employee Feedback and Action on Company transport via Emails and E-transport tools

Educational Aspect

The awareness of women employees of their company policies on sexual harassment and gender discrimination and the more they are encouraged to report all instances of discrimination without fear, the greater would be their feeling of security and empowerment.

Minimum Requirement

- Awareness and training on security and safety. Dos & Don'ts while traveling by company cabs, Emergency contacts, Police help lines, company contact points

- Awareness of the company policy on sexual harassment, on gender discrimination or gender biased approach and the complaint process
- Regular reminders of the ethical values of the company, through emails, posters, sessions, etc
- Provide training to all women employees and educate them about their rights and facilities
- Sensitisation of male employees through training sessions
- Training of all women staff on staying alert and being better prepared
- Training of supervisors and other staff on how to respond to complaints of sexual harassment/gender discrimination

Aspirational Recommendations

- Self-defence classes to be organized at the workplace or sponsored by the organisation
- Posters advocating gender sensitivity to be displayed prominently
- All organizations to have a system in place to monitor their activities on gender sensitization and security and safety issues
- On-line basic security awareness training where women employees are guided on how to act when faced with sexual harassment
- Drivers Training on Safety and etiquettes done twice a year with a special focus on mindset /behavioral change

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