



Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

MYTHS AND FACTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

FACILITATOR ANSWER GUIDE

USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE TO RATE EACH OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW:

- A. **Strongly Agree**
- B. **Agree**
- C. **Disagree**
- D. **Strongly Disagree**
- E. **Don't Know**

- 1) The extent of a victim's resistance is a major factor in determining if sexual harassment has occurred.

The answer is agree and disagree. The law is very clear on this issue. If the harasser is a supervisor, resistance is not necessary because of the imbalance of power. If the harasser is a co-worker (an equal) there must be some resistance; the victim must say "no" at least once.

- 2) The goal of sexual harassment is to assert power.

Agree. Sexual Harassment has little to do with sex, pleasure, or flirting. The goal is power over another person, by humiliating them or making them uncomfortable.

- 3) There must be repeated acts of harassment in order to consider it a violation of the law.

The answer is agree and disagree. This depends on the severity of the harassment; it also depends on whether the harasser is a supervisor or a co-worker. If the harasser is a co-worker (an equal), unless the harassment is extreme, (for example, physical assault) the act must be repeated. "Quid pro quo" harassment (by a supervisor) does not need to be repeated. Hostile work environment harassment by a supervisor puts a company in jeopardy; for this reason, supervisors should always act with caution.



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4) Victims can successfully resist harassers if they try.

Strongly disagree. Victims can sometimes resist their harassers, and this training offers suggestions for how to make it clear to a harasser that the behavior should stop. However, some harassers don't stop, no matter what they're told.

Managers must:

- Create and maintain a work environment in which a worker feels free to tell a harasser to stop, and
- Deal with any harasser who does not stop when asked to do so.

5) Victims often pretend that they are sexually harassed for revenge or to cover up poor work performance.

Disagree. False accusations of sexual harassment are very rare. 95% of sexual harassment cases have merit, and a good company policy for investigating harassment should weed out cases that don't have merit.

What is more important is that 98% of the incidents of sexual harassment are never reported. This is because a worker who reports sexual harassment runs the risk of losing a job and damaging a career.

Victims may hesitate to report sexual harassment for a number of reasons:

- They don't know that what they're dealing with is sexual harassment and illegal.
- They're afraid no one will believe them.
- They've seen others report harassment who have been penalized for it.
- They want to 'fit in' on the job.
- They're afraid they'll lose their job.
- They're afraid the harassers will lose their jobs.
- They're embarrassed.
- They're very depressed by the harassment and unable to act.
- They don't know where to go for help or to file a complaint.
- They're afraid the harasser will harm them.



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- 6) Sexual harassment will always be part of the construction or skilled manufacturing workplace because you can't change attitudes.

Disagree. We may not be able to change attitudes, but we can change behavior. Moreover, as people change their behavior, they sometimes change their attitudes. Supervisors are not responsible for changing workers' attitudes; they are responsible for appropriate behavior on a site.

- 7) Victims invite sexual harassment by their dress and by their actions.

Strongly disagree. Sexual harassment is not a victim's fault in any way. Women in our industry do not dress in clothes that invite sexual attention, yet harassment is common. Participants may say that women who don't wear bras or who wear tank tops are inviting sexual harassment. To counter this, ask if men can wear tank tops? Does company dress policy require a bra? Do OSHA regulations require a bra? If women are not violating either company policy or OSHA regulations they can dress as they please.

- 8) Sexual harassment is innocent flirtation and most people are flattered by it.

Strongly disagree. Sexual harassment is extremely damaging to the victim. It can cause stress-related illnesses, depression and loss of self-esteem. It can also cause people to leave jobs, causing economic hardship to them and their families.

Sexual harassment damages a company as well. No figures are available about the costs of sexual harassment in the construction industry, but we can assume that it is as high as in other industries. For example, a 1988 study of the federal government showed that the cost of sexual harassment over two years was \$267,000,000.

Sexual harassment can lead to low morale, reduced loyalty, absenteeism, low productivity and employee turnover. A sexual harassment lawsuit can cost enormous legal fees and damage settlements, time lost and adverse publicity.

- 9) Women who complain of sexual harassment are too sensitive, especially in a male-dominated industry.

Strongly disagree. Sexual harassment is illegal. Management has a responsibility to set up policies that prevent sexual harassment and to deal with any harassment that occurs in the spite of these policies.