Physical Security in Government Workplaces
Ten Reflective Questions for Better Governance

These questions have been developed to assist leaders to understand and explore the performance of their agencies in handling physical security issues related to violence and aggression, and potentially also to reflect on their own leadership across this domain. The questions are focused at governance level and are intended to help personal reflection, internal conversations, and thinking.

This is not intended as a compliance exercise—it is entirely up to agencies to determine whether and how they might use this tool. The development of these questions was informed by similar approaches taken by the New Zealand Institute of Directors and Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum, but expanded and shaped to be helpful for the public sector context and the government's Protective Security Requirements.

The questions do not replace the need for robust underlying management systems, which are outlined in the [Health and Safety Performance Improvement Tool](#) on the WorkSafe website. They are intended to be useful for Chief Executives and senior teams, but could also be used at other levels of an organisation or for exploring issues with peer or partner agencies. For example, you may use it to facilitate a leadership team discussion or alternatively you could refer it to your security, property and service design specialists and invite them to report back to you on their joint assessments on how your organisation is going. It is also good practice to test the results of the reflective questions with staff and representatives.

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The idea of the sub-questions is to help get past the situation where governance arrangements and policies and processes are already in place and to a greater understanding of how they are being used, and are they working.

The questions (and groups) below align with your personal health and safety obligations, as an 'officer' under the health and safety law (particularly your 'due diligence' requirements). These are framed in the context of the health and safety and protective security requirements (PSR) that apply to your organisation. Ensuring your organisation is meeting its health and safety and PSR requirements is essential to meeting your own personal duties.

The questions are grouped under the headings: Set, Lead, and Reflect. However, there are other ways of grouping these questions in terms of other frameworks such as health and safety due diligence requirements and the PSR expectations. The table shows how these elements inter-relate and reinforce each other:

Qu	Group	Health and Safety Due Diligence Expectations	PSR Expectations
1	Set	Gain an understanding of the nature of the operations of the business or undertaking of the PCBU and generally of the hazards and risks associated with those operations	**GOV3:** Agencies must adopt a risk management approach that covers all areas of protective security activity across their organisation **Capability Maturity Model (CMM) Vectors**: Governance Oversight and Risk Management
2	Set	Ensure the PCBU has, and implements, processes for complying with any duty or obligation of the PCBU under the law	**GOV3 supporting GOV1**: Agencies must establish a governance structure that successfully manages protective security risk **CMM Vectors:** Executive Commitment; Risk Management
3	Set	Ensure the PCBU has available for use, and uses, appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety from work carried out as part of the conduct of the undertaking	**PHYSEC1**: Agencies must provide clear direction on physical security through the development and implementation of agency policy **CMM Vectors:** Management Roles and Responsibilities; Education and Communication
4	Set	Verify the provision and use of the resources and processes (using the control risks and hazards)	**GOV3 and PHYSEC 4 and 5**: Risk management, health and safety obligations, and duty of care to members of the public **CMM Vectors**: Risk Management and Physical Security
5	Lead	Ensure the (organisation) has available for use, and uses, appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety from work carried out	**GOV6 and PHYSEC2**: Provide staff and contractors with sufficient information, security awareness, and training **CMM Vectors:** Physical Security, Monitoring and Assurance
6	Lead	Verify the provision and use of the resources and processes (using the control risks and hazards)	**GOV5 and PHYSEC3**: Assurance reporting and the integration of physical security in selecting, designing and modifying facilities **CMM Vectors**: Organisation culture and behaviour
7	Reflect	Verify the provision and use of the resources and processes (using the control risks and hazards)	**GOV5 and PHYSEC 7**: Assurance reporting and planning for heightened security levels in case of emergency or increased threat **CMM Vectors:** Risk Management, Physical Security
8	Reflect	Ensure the organisation has appropriate processes for receiving and considering information regarding incidents, hazards, and risks and for responding in a timely way	**GOV5 and PHYSEC2**: Assurance reporting and incident management **CMM Vectors**: Physical Security and Incident Management
9	Reflect	Acquire and keep up-to-date, knowledge of work health and safety matters	**GOV3 and PHYSEC 4 and 5**: Risk management, health and safety obligations, and duty of care to members of the public **CMM vectors:** Strategy development and delivery and organisation culture and behaviour
10	Reflect	Verify the provision and use of the resources and processes	**GOV 5 and PHYSEC 4 and 5** Assurance reporting, health and safety obligations, and duty of care to members of the public **CMM vectors**: Executive commitment and governance oversight, Monitoring and Assurance and Physical Security

Set (Define your approach and set your expectations)	**1**	**Do we fully understand the threat of violence and aggression and the risk for our organisation (organisation context, service, location and client profiles)?**	• Do we have agreed definitions and/or a common language for what we mean by violence and aggression risk in our organisation, so we are all talking about the same thing and to the same degree?
			• Have we undertaken a formal threat assessment that has been documented, regularly updated, and discussed with New Zealand Intelligence Community (NZIC) and with our workers?
			• Can our senior managers, specialists and front-facing workers describe the aspects of the organisation's role and service delivery environment that might generate this risk e.g. who are our customers, how and where they experience services and what triggers urgency, frustration, anxiety?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident.   ☐ Uncertain. I need to follow up.   ☐ Uncomfortable. I need more.

Notes:

I need to follow up with:

Set	2	**Do we have a common risk approach through our organisation to support the management of violence and aggression potential?**	Does the risk management approach:

Does the risk management approach:

- Describe our risk tolerance for health and safety and protective security risks and provide for regular review of risk to eliminate or mitigate risks?

- Support the organisation to think about service and security together – as part of broader operational risk management?

- Visibly translate into executive commitment and management direction, reporting, stakeholder relationships, and agency internal communications?

- Get validated by external eyes – e.g. Risk and Assurance Board, NZIC feedback, worker representatives and other external parties?

- Help discussions at the senior leadership table and with frontline workers (or is it technical and/or impenetrable)?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident.	☐ Uncertain. I need to follow up.	☐ Uncomfortable. I need more.

Notes:

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Set	3	Have we communicated our standards and expectations in a way that is understood by the front line and through the management layers? And are the roles and accountabilities understood (including partner agencies, contractors, and suppliers)?	• Has sufficient engagement occurred to ensure that security, health and safety, property and service design capability work together? Does our reporting confirm this?
			• Does our reporting indicate that our people are working with the standards we have set, and actively thinking about what needs to be done more and/or differently – e.g. that risk appreciation is dynamic?
			• Do we know frontline workers' perspectives and views are feeding back through to the executive level to indicate that people understand our expectations and their obligations, and also feel they can raise new or unresolved concerns?
			• Have we had the hard conversations when we perceive service and security to be in tension with each other?
			• Are our expectations embedded in contractual and or working arrangements with partner agencies and how have we co-designed how this works on the ground?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident.   ☐ Uncertain. I need to follow up.   ☐ Uncomfortable. I need more.

Notes:

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Set	**4**	**Have we identified and assessed our risk controls?**	• Have we identified and described the preventive, detective, protective and recovery controls needed to manage the risk in each location?

- Have we identified and described the preventive, detective, protective and recovery controls needed to manage the risk in each location?

- Have we worked this through with our partners and people we share customers with locally?

- Have we described an integrated set of responses that matches the experienced and anticipated violence and aggression risks?

- Have we weighed up all relevant matters to decide what is reasonably practicable to protect people from harm?

- Have we evaluated how likely the hazard or risk is to happen, what degree of harm the hazard or the risk might cause, how much is known about the hazard or risk, and how to eliminate or minimise the risk?

- Have we assessed whether the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk is grossly disproportionate to the risk?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident. ☐ Uncertain. I need to follow up. ☐ Uncomfortable. I need more.

Notes:

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Lead	**5**	**Do we have the right capabilities (organisation and workforce) to manage the risk of violence and aggression on an ongoing basis?**
(Make it possible)		

- Do we have dedicated specialist security resources (people and tools/technology) available to support management and frontline workers; matched to the nature and scale of the risk and response? How do we know it's meeting the frontline need?

- Are we making good progress with the capability and capacity we have?

- Have we got in place the learning loops to test whether we have the right capability in place and to inform adjustments?

- What data do we get on training implementation and refreshers that tells us the capability building is happening and working for participants?

- How have we articulated expectation that security, health and safety, property, and service design capability work together? Are the products and reporting we receive demonstrating integration?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident. ☐ Uncertain. I need to follow up. ☐ Uncomfortable. I need more.

Notes:

I need to follow up with:

| **Lead** | **6** | **Do leaders at all levels (from front line to senior management) and our workers challenge and test the processes in place for managing violence and aggression risk and raise ideas that are acted on?** | • Have we involved those who wear the risk in the discussions about how to manage it?

• Do we ensure the design and refresh of our security programme is directly informed by worker and manager feedback? How do we create opportunities for them to say what they think and experience and not what they think we want to hear?

• Do we provide opportunities for staff to raise ideas and suggestions for improvement? Are these reported to the senior level?

• When we talk to frontline workers and managers, do we listen to learn how our controls work in practice? (May be part of a formal control monitoring framework.)

• Do we cross reference with customer surveys and talk to worker representatives and customer advocates to see if there is alignment between what they experience and hear about, and what we think is happening? |

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident. ☐ Uncertain. I need to follow up. ☐ Uncomfortable. I need more.

Notes:

I need to follow up with:

Reflect

(Monitor, learn and adapt)

7

Is the right information available to the right people at the right time?

- Do we ask partner agencies if they're getting what they need from us to manage their risks?

- Are we getting regular intelligence from our service delivery partners and agencies who share customers with us about this risk?

- Do we stress test our security responses to understand if our intelligence is current and our approach appropriate?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident.

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Notes:

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Reflect   **8**   **Is there transparency in information, and visibility of performance progress, for the effectiveness of violence and aggression risk controls across our organisation?**

- **Do we publish measures of our security effectiveness for workers and partners to have visibility of what's happening?**

- **Do we publish what happens when we test and how we learn from this?**

- **Do our governance groups regularly see the results of testing our security systems, including tests that work across our internal and external supply chains and partnership relationships?**

- **Do we receive advice on how to redesign and engage with workers on the testing where we are not learning from existing tests?**

How comfortable are you with the responses?

☐ Confident.

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Notes:

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Reflect	**9**	**Are there any patterns or emerging trends – within our organisation or across the sector? Do we adjust our risk focus based on the information in our monitoring framework?**

- Do we have historic and current tracking information that records incidents and threats, and what is the analysis of this telling us?
- Do we get intelligence from frontline workers about how they experience violence and aggression?
- Do we compare the frontline intelligence and the tracking information alongside each other? Does our analysis tell us if the patterns we're seeing are inside/outside expectations?
- Do we identify and discuss what our security gaps and issues are?
- Do our security and service design specialists collectively tell us what is happening in the sector group/s we look to for innovation or trends, and response options?
- Can we see our agency in context of its environment for this risk area? Are we comfortable with where we're positioned or are we out of line/need to change?
- Do we respond when we identify a shift in performance/progress/the risk environment? Do we validate our approach with partners and external parties?

How comfortable are you with the responses?

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| Reflect | 10 | **Are we on target to achieve our goals for the management of this risk?** | • Do we need more ambition or are we overreaching our capacity? |
| | | | • Do our lead and lag indicators tell us about progress? |

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The Institute of Directors' Key Questions

You may also want to consider the following questions. These are based on a checklist of questions developed by New Zealand Institute of Directors and WorkSafe New Zealand to help directors (i.e. 'officers') to meet their statutory health and safety obligations and duties.

These questions provide leaders with some primer queries they can use to hold management to account in order to create a healthy and safe workplace culture. The original questions and other supporting resources are available from the [Institute of Directors' website](#)

Does your leadership demonstrate commitment to health and safety?

Do you ensure the organisation's risks are assessed and appropriate mitigation measures are put in place?

Does the organisation involve its workers in health and safety?

Do you ensure your organisation's health and safety targets are challenging, realistic and are not creating unintended consequences?

Are you and your leadership team receiving health and safety data/information? Is it sufficient?

Does your organisation ensure all workers are competent and adequately trained in their health and safety responsibilities and accountabilities?

Does your organisation have sufficient resources (people, equipment, systems, and budget) for its health and safety programme?

How connected are you to what happens at your organisation's work sites? What measures are in place to inform you?

Does your organisation have a schedule of audits and reviews to ensure the health and safety management system is fit-for-purpose?

How do you ensure that actions identified in incident reports, audits, and reviews are communicated to the appropriate level within the organisation and effectively addressed by the organisation?

Does the organisation have policies and processes in place to ensure contractors used by the organisation have satisfactory health and safety standards

How does your organisation's performance compare with other comparable organisations and how do you know?

Do you recognise and celebrate success?