



Responding to aggressive customers

Key crime prevention tips

- Stay calm.
- Listen with empathy.
- Offer solutions.
- Stay safe.
- Call for help.

Tips for responding to aggressive customers

Stay calm

- Only one person should talk to the customer. Many people talking can create confusion.
- Do not raise your voice even if the customer is yelling.
- Keep smiling to ease the tension.
- Avoid using sarcasm.
- Think about your body language. Avoid pacing, tapping, crossing your arms or rolling your eyes.
- Excuse yourself and leave the room if you need to take deep breaths.

Listen with empathy

- Remain patient and acknowledge the customer's concerns.
- Ask questions.
- Do not interrupt.
- Allow the person to vent, it can relieve their frustration.
- Summarise their concerns to make sure you have understood.

- The following phrases may be useful:

- I understand that you are frustrated
- I can see how difficult this has been
- Thank you for bringing this to my attention
- I appreciate how you feel/That's tough, let's see how we can get this sorted

Offer solutions

- Do not over-promise but explain what options are available.
- Ensure you do what you said you would.

Stay safe

- Staff not involved in the incident should stand back but watch the situation.
- Keep a distance between you and the customer. Do not enter the person's physical space.
- Use natural barriers including the counter, shelving or clothing racks.
- Remove any items that could be used as weapons.
- Do not turn your back to the customer.
- Move towards the exit.
- Activate the duress/panic alarm. Note: the best alarms can be discretely activated. Options include a button near the cash draw or activation by foot or knee.
- Utilise evacuation plans

Call for help

- Staff not involved in the incident should call for help from security or police.
- If the person's behaviour does not change, tell them to leave and tell them if they do not they



are trespassing.

- Do not force the person to leave. Wait for help.

What to do if there is an aggressive customer in your store

- Tell your supervisor or manager.
- As a witness, report the offence rather than waiting for your manager to report it.
- No issue is too small to report. Report suspicious behaviour to police.
- If required, report the incident to Work Safe Victoria on 13 23 60 or www.worksafe.vic.gov.au.

Report it

- For emergencies, to report a crime in progress, or for immediate police attendance, call Triple Zero (000).
- For non-emergencies, call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or report online at www.police.vic.gov.au/police-assistance-line-and-online-reporting.
- Report anonymously to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or www.crimestoppers.com.au.

Additional support

- Victoria Police can connect you to counseling and support services.

Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal

- You may be eligible for financial help through the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT).
- Help can be for counseling, medical expenses,

and loss of earnings.

- VOCAT does not provide compensation for lost or damaged property. To apply, visit www.vocat.vic.gov.au.

**For more information,
visit police.vic.gov.au/your-safety**