

# SAFETY NOW AN ISSUE FOR ORGANISATIONS

Women are reporting early for work, cabs for night shifts are monitored by GPS systems and helplines are being set up for distress calls

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The recent horrific gang-rape in Delhi has forced many organisations to take a look at all aspects that concern women's safety. They have taken cognizance of the issue and begun re-evaluating their strategy in this regard in close cooperation with HR. It is now an issue of zero compromise.

Changes are being made in the safety policy framework. Having said that, where exigencies of work demand that women work late, corporates have to ensure that their female employees are taken care of or that the same work gets done in more earthly hours wherever possible, says Ronesh Puri, managing director, Executive Access.

Companies across the country have taken stock of the situation and the risks that their female employees can be subject to. The first step has been to collate data on areas the women workforce come from. Many are also looking at drawing up a policy for seasonal tasks that require late hours from women. They could be account staff during

annual audits, HR professionals during appraisals, the marketing managers during product launches and the payroll team during tax filing etc, says Kamal Karanth of Kelly Services India.

At Hyundai Construction Equipment India Pvt Ltd, which has 5% women on the rolls, a woman has been included in its ethics committee to ensure that other women are comfortable sharing their problems. "We have made sure that none of the chartered buses ferrying our employees has tinted glasses. The company has also decided not to continue with the practice of calling women staff over the weekend for audit work. They will now attend office only during regular hours from 8.15am to 5.45pm. Also, the employee to be dropped last will be a male and not a female," says Dixon Jose, head, HR and administration, adding that women employees have also been given a single-digit emergency number in their mobiles to seek help in case of emergency.

Dell India, where employees work 24x7, already has a policy in place to ensure that women travelling from home to office and back, and those travelling

on business outside of their usual locations are mandatorily provided a secure form of transportation at night.

"Door-to-door company transport is mandatory for all women working at night. In the event of regular working hours of a woman employee getting extended, we compulsorily provide a safe drop and a pick-up option. This is besides providing parking for their personal vehicles," says Alok Dwivedi, director, HR, Dell India. All cab movements and locations are monitored through a GPS system fitted in them, he adds.

At Serco Global services too, the company has set up a 24x7 helpline, a new initiative across all locations for women in distress. The helpline is for issues such as sexual harassment, discrimination at the workplace, and transport facilities during late working hours, etc. It has also initiated self-defence workshops for women employees.

"We have set up a helpdesk where women employees can report cases of sexual harassment or discrimination issues," says Manuel D'Souza, chief human resource officer, Serco Global Services.



## WHEN COMMUTING TO AND FROM WORK...

**Stay alert:** Don't let your guard down. If something makes you worry even slightly about your safety, get out of that place immediately

**Please trust and make good use of your 'gut feel' or 'intuition' or 'sixth sense':** There will invariably be signs, however small or seemingly insignificant, that warn you that all is just not OK. Make it a habit to read and notice these warning signs and go with your intuition to quickly retract yourself, move out or immediately get away from potentially unsafe situations

**Don't take any remark/act lightly:** In case of trouble, respond with a stern voice and threaten to take a picture which might scare away the attacker. If it doesn't, raise your voice immediately to gather a crowd. Don't be afraid to hit the culprit

**Shun public transport at night:** As much as possible, avoid late

night travel using public transport. If that's not possible then be sure to travel only in a crowded bus

**Park safely:** Avoid parking your car in a desolate area. Lock the doors immediately after entering the car. Take known routes and no short cuts you don't know much about

**Phone alert:** While travelling at night, don't keep your phone in your hand. Remember, the phone is the first thing your attacker will throw away. Activate your speed dials which can be used to dial numbers in emergencies. Keep it in your pocket or at a place from where you can easily take it out, dial a number and leave it on. If you have a smartphone, then install emergency apps which can send texts to known people and can even dial the police number in case of emergency

Source: B Mohan Kumar, director, HR Advisory Services, Bangalore



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