WHAT THE LAW SAYS

The retail sector has remained open during the corona pandemic, and that puts a lot of pressure on both management and employees, who need to navigate the rules and regulations. The many regulations, such as the need to wear a mask, to use hand sanitizer and to maintain social distancing in stores can, in the worst-case scenario, lead to conflicts with customers. Talk to each other about how you prevent conflicts with customers and plan for what you need to do if conflicts do happen as a result of the corona restrictions.

If your store has a Health and Safety Organisation, it has to be involved in this work.

A conflict is a disagreement where one or more of the people in the situation become emotionally involved, for example by getting angry, annoyed or upset.

The employer has to make sure that work at all levels is planned and organised so that it can be carried out responsibly with regard to health and safety.

Among other things, this means that you need to prevent conflicts with customers from escalating and do what you can to de-escalate them.

The employer needs to make sure that necessary training and instruction is given in, for example:

- how to handle conflicts with customers

- how to deal with customers who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, confused or behaving in a way that makes dialogue impossible.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Regulation on performance of work, Work Environment Denmark's regulation no. 1234 of 29 October about the execution of the work: §4, §7, §18 (in Danish only)

GOOD TO KNOW

How to prevent conflicts with customers

When a customer is wearing a mask, it can be hard to read their facial expressions and, as a result, their emotional state. This can have an effect on how conflicts are prevented, as employees have to handle customers who are hard to read because of the mask. Put conflicts and conflict management on the daily agenda - speak openly about your experiences with conflicts and how you solve them.

- Acknowledge that it is not always possible to deal with a conflict.

- Talk about how you can support each other during the conflict and afterwards.

- To learn how to act and react in the right way when conflicts need to be managed, it is important to understand what conflicts are and what happens in the moment. Learn more about this at www.trapned.dk

- Conflict management is about detaching the customer from their emotional involvement. This can happen by, for example, trying to understand the customer's situation and by asking and figuring out how the customer is experiencing the situation, as well as showing them that you are listening and trying to understand them.

- Be clear about what you can do if someone has a hard time handling the situation or does not have the energy or capacity to handle a conflict. In this case, it can be better to ask a colleague to help before the conflict escalates.

- Train and instruct employees in how they can read customers with masks on, for example by their tone of voice, gestures or body language.

- Shield or increase the distance between employees and the customers they serve.

  This is what you can do if, for example, a customer is not wearing a mask

- Ask the customer why they are not wearing a mask. Remember that some people are exempt from wearing a mask, for example because of allergies or anxiety. People do not need documentation to prove they are exempt.

- If the customer does not have a legitimate reason not to wear a mask, then kindly ask the customer to put on a mask. Politely make them aware that both the customer and the store can be fined if they do not wear a mask.

- Remember that you are only required to raise the matter of the customer not wearing a mask, and that the final authority on the matter lies with the police.

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READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

From BFA Handel

- Videos and educational material on
  www.trapned.dk: De-escalation Guide - Learn how
  to manage conflict (Danish only)

- Guide: The Conflict Ladder - How to Rrevent and
  Manage Conflicts.

Rules and advice from the relevant authorities

- Click here to see the Danish Health Authoruty's
  page on covid-19 in English

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