



# New York Makes Key Changes to Retail Worker Safety Act: 5 Takeaways for Employers

Insights

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As retail employers in New York prepare for new workplace violence prevention requirements to take effect, you'll want to be aware of key changes state lawmakers passed last week. Specifically, amendments to the Retail Worker Safety Act (RWSA) will push back the effective date for certain requirements and ease other obligations. The amendments are still pending Governor Hochul's signature, but they are expected to be enacted soon. Here are five key things you need to know about the amendments ahead of the upcoming effective dates. **[Ed. Note: Gov. Hochul signed the RWSA amendments (SB S740) into law on February 14.]**

## 5 Key Changes for Retail Employers to Note

1. **Updated Effective Date:** The RWSA will soon require retail employers to implement a written workplace violence prevention policy and conduct violence prevention training. A comprehensive summary of the law is available [here](#). While most requirements of the RWSA are set to take effect on March 4, the amendments push back the effective date for the RWSA's policy, training, and notice provisions to June 2. The effective date for panic buttons — now amended to be called "silent response buttons" — remains unchanged from January 1, 2027.
2. **Panic Button Requirement Replaced by Silent Response Button:** The original RWSA required larger retailers — defined as those with 500 or more retail employees nationwide — to provide employees with panic buttons that would immediately contact 911 and dispatch local law enforcement to the workplace when triggered. "**Silent response buttons**" replace the RWSA's panic button requirement. Rather than alert law enforcement, these buttons request assistance from individuals such as security officers, managers, or supervisors.
3. **Higher Headcount for Silent Response Buttons:** The amendments require employers with 500 or more retail employees **statewide** — rather than nationwide as originally required by the RWSA's panic button requirement — to provide the silent response buttons for internal alerts.
4. **Eased Training Requirements for Smaller Retailers:** The RWSA requires retailers to conduct workplace violence prevention training for employees upon hire and annually thereafter. Employers with fewer than fifty employees will get a reprieve on the annual training requirements. The amendments require employers with **fewer than fifty retail employees** to provide workplace violence training to retail employees upon hire and then **once every two years thereafter**.

5. **Language Requirements:** Under the amended law, the New York Department of Labor's (NY DOL's) model templates of workplace violence prevention policies will be issued in English as well as the **twelve most common non-English languages spoken in New York**. These languages will be determined based on the data provided in the most recent American Community Survey published by the United States Census Bureau.

## What's Next?

Although it appears retailers in New York will get a small reprieve on the RWSA, you should consider taking steps now to comply with the law:

- Once the NY DOL prepares the model policy and training, retail employers will need to create workplace violence prevention plan and conduct training. You can use the DOL's models or develop your own version that meets or exceeds the minimum standards.
- You should take the time now to start assessing risk factors in the workplace and emergency procedures.
- Larger retailers will also need to assess the need for silent response buttons.

## Conclusion

We are continuing to monitor these developments, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. If you have questions, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney in in our [New York City office](#) or on our [Workplace Safety and Catastrophe Management team](#).

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