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Harassment and Hostile Work Environment on a Security Post

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Under FEHA, an employer must take reasonable steps to prevent and correct harassment of its employees, including harassment directed at a security officer by a client's employees, tenants, or residents at a post site.

Harassment isn't limited to coworkers

Security officers often work on client premises where the harassing conduct comes from a client's staff, tenants, or residents rather than a direct coworker.

FEHA holds the employer responsible for correcting harassment by non-employees if the employer knew or should have known and failed to act.

A single severe incident, or a pattern of unwelcome conduct based on a protected trait, can create a hostile work environment claim.

Examples and employer duty

Scenario	Who is involved	Employer's typical duty
Resident makes repeated racial remarks to a guard	Client resident	Investigate and, if needed, reassign or restrict site access
Supervisor makes unwanted sexual comments	Coworker/supervisor	Investigate, discipline, prevent recurrence
Client staff repeatedly mocks a guard's accent	Client employee	Raise with client, document, consider reassignment

Documenting a harassment concern

- Write down dates, times, locations, and exact words used
- Identify any witnesses on shift
- Report through the employer's internal complaint process in writing
- Keep copies of any texts, emails, or incident reports submitted

Research and education only

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For guidance on a specific incident, consult a licensed California attorney or contact the California Civil Rights Department.

Quick answers

Can my employer be liable for a client's employee harassing me?

Yes, if the employer knew or should have known and failed to take reasonable corrective action.

Does one bad comment count as harassment?

Usually a pattern is required, but a single sufficiently severe incident can also qualify.

Should I report verbally or in writing?

Written reports create a clearer record and are generally recommended in addition to any verbal report.

What if my employer does nothing after I report?

You may be able to file a complaint with the California Civil Rights Department or the EEOC.

Primary sources — read the official text

Harassment prevention guidance	California Civil Rights Department	https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/harassment-prevention-training/
Workplace harassment	U.S. EEOC	https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment
FEHA text	California Legislative Information	https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?division=3.&part=1.&lawCode=GOV&title=2
File a harassment complaint	California Civil Rights Department	https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess/

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