



Risk Management Notes

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Workplace Violence and You

Layoffs, hiring freezes, mounting personal bills, mortgage foreclosures and other increased personal stress factors are only a few of the conditions contributing to today's workplace environment.

Per the Office of Safety and Health Statistics of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, workplace violence committed by an employee or recently fired worker resulted in 58 deaths in 2007. Nationally, 12 percent of job-related deaths are from workplace violence, which is second only to employee motor vehicle accidents.

For women, workplace violence accounts for 42 percent of job related deaths. Unfortunately, homicides are only the tip of the iceberg. Roughly 2 million U.S. workers are victimized by workplace violence each year, a rate of 13 incidents for every 1,000 employees, based on data collected during the studied period.

In addition to employee-on-employee incidents, a high level of workplace violence occurs to our social service and health care workers, where employees are frequently assaulted by the very people that they are trying to serve. One of the most hazardous tasks involves the removal of a child from a home, a role of Child Protection and Welfare Services.

Recognizing the Signs

According to Nicholas Dillon, director of education and risk services for Aegis Corporation, who has been studying issue of workplace violence for more than 15 years, recognizing the warning signs of potential violence is critical.

"In most cases-85 percent of the time-there are warning signs before an event happens," said Mr. Dillon. "Anger, alterations in hygiene, attendance issues, depression and appearing withdrawn all serve as red flags."

Training and preparedness that covers recognizing potential violent situations and the successful disarming of them are essential to reducing this workplace hazard. It is estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, per a survey of the nation's 7.1 million private businesses, that 70 percent have no formal violence prevention program in place. Presenting a Workplace Violence Program is sometimes a very uncomfortable conversation for employers and employees to have and therefore, this type of training can be very difficult for all parties concerned. However, creating a zero-tolerance policy towards workplace violence is fundamental to preventing a mild problem from becoming catastrophic. Open communications with employees is the first line of defense in workplace violence protection, because if anything is going to happen, the employees are usually the first to know or recognize the warning signals.

Finally, we have fire drills once or twice a year, but have you ever had a workplace violence preparedness drill? It doesn't have to be one in which everyone leaves the building, but one in which everyone reviews the policies and procedures in the event of a workplace incident. We all think we know our employees and how they will react under pressure. But being wrong in this case can be fatal.



In most cases of workplace violence there were warning signs preceding the event. Train your employees to recognize the signs.



Preventive Measures

1. Be aware of the warning signs of violence
2. Mentally prepare for "what if" situations
3. Understand company procedures about violent situations
4. Be aware of weapons brought into the workplace
5. Take all threats seriously

Alert management immediately if any of the above occur

Warning Signs of Violence

Stage 1

- Unusual behavior changes
- Uncooperative with direct supervisor on a regular basis
- Curses profusely
- Argues with coworkers constantly
- Spreads gossip and rumors deliberately to harm others
- Makes unwanted sexual remarks
- Hostility toward customers or coworkers
- Irritability and anxiety escalates
- Sleep disturbances are mentioned on the job

Stage 2

- Plays the role of a victim
- Writes violent or sexual notes to other employees or management
- Verbalizes desires to harm coworkers or employer
- Sabotages equipment or steals property
- Disregards company policies and procedures
- Levels of arguments or altercations increase with all personnel
- Accidents increase; either physical or traffic-related
- Noted decrease in interest and confidence in work

Stage 3

- Intense anger is the frequent emotion displayed. It results in depression or withdrawal, property destruction, physical fighting, suicidal threats and use of weapons to harm others.

What You Can Do At Work

1. Treat each other with respect
2. Get to know the people around you and agree to look out for each other
3. Look intently for how everyone is doing
4. Improve communication throughout your company
5. Improve working conditions by offering suggestions for safety
6. Notify management of any suspicious activities
7. Watch for the warning signs of violence
8. Encourage each other to be alert for danger signals in coworkers
9. Promote workplace integrity between all employees
10. Listen for verbal intimidation on the job
11. Watch for psychological abuse on the job between employees
12. Be aware of behavioral pattern changes in fellow workers
13. Become more responsive to each other

**Awareness is the first step in preventing workplace violence.
BE PROACTIVE.**

