

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



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Workplace Violence – A Growing Concern

Workplace violence is violence or the threat of violence against workers. It can occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide, one of the leading causes of job-related deaths. However it manifests itself, workplace violence is a growing concern for employers and employees nationwide.

Vulnerable Employees

Some 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence each year. Workplace violence can strike anywhere, and no one is immune. Some workers, however, are at increased risk. Among them are workers who exchange money with the public; deliver passengers, goods, or services; or work alone or in small groups, during late night or early morning hours, in high-crime areas, or in community settings and homes where they have extensive contact with the public. This group includes healthcare and social service workers such as visiting nurses, psychiatric evaluators, and probation officers; community workers such as gas and water utility employees, phone and cable TV installers, and letter carriers; retail workers; and taxi drivers.

Warning Signs

Experts say that while it's difficult to come up with a precise profile of a person who could turn violent, there are

a number of warning signs employees and employers should watch for:

- Watch out for direct or veiled threats.
- Look out for intimidating or aggressive behavior.
- Be alert to employees bringing weapons to the workplace or employees who seem overly fascinated with firearms and/or violence.
- Pay attention to employees who appear to be going through a difficult time.
- Look for employees who suddenly start showing up late or not showing up at all that previously were always on time.
- Pay attention to workers who show contempt for fellow workers and or superiors.

Prevention and Safety Tips

Nothing can guarantee that an employee will not become a victim of workplace violence. These steps, however, can help reduce the odds:

- Learn how to recognize, avoid, or diffuse potentially violent situations by attending personal safety training programs.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security and report all incidents immediately in writing.

- When having to go alone into unfamiliar locations or situations, be cautious by staying connected with your employer, keeping others apprised of your daily itinerary, and using common sense.
- Carry only minimal money and required identification into community settings.
- Check your behavior and make sure you're presenting your best civil and respectful self.

Workplace violence is a complicated issue. It's important to consult with management or HR for questions or concerns about any behavior that could lead up to violence, as early as possible. Take advantage of training made available to you, such as mental health awareness, civility, harassment, bullying, respectful behavior, conflict management, cyber mobbing, mediation, anger management and defusing skills. For additional support, talk to a manager, HR personnel or the Employee Assistance Program.

Sources: https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/factsheet-workplace-violence.pdf and http://www.ncdsv.org/images/workplace_violence_tips.pdf

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