



An Employer's Worst Nightmare: *Recognizing Workplace Violence and Responding to an Active Shooter*

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DISCLAIMER



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## Workplace Violence

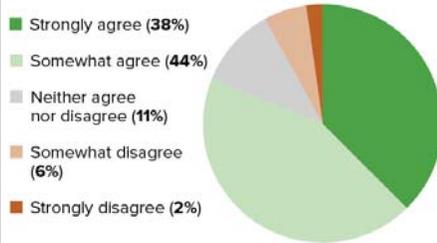
- Any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.
  - Threats and verbal abuse
  - Physical assaults
  - Homicide
- Includes acts that damage an organization's resource or capabilities
- Includes domestic violence that spills over into the workplace

## Workplace Violence

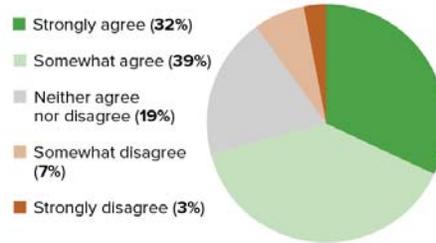
- OSHA estimates over 2 MILLION U.S. workers report having been a victim of violence at work each year
- In 2017, BLS reported that over 400 fatal injuries in the workplace were homicides
- Nearly 1 in 7 employees feel unsafe at work

## Does the Workforce Feel Prepared to Respond to Violence?

**Eighty-two percent of HR professionals** somewhat or strongly agree that they would know what to do if they witnessed or were involved in a workplace-violence incident.



**Seventy-one percent of all employees** somewhat or strongly agree that they would know what to do if they witnessed or were involved in a workplace-violence incident.



Source: NORC at the University of Chicago's AmeriSpeak Omnibus survey and the Society for Human Resource Management.

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## Types of Workplace Violence

- Criminal Intent
- Customer/client
- Co-worker
- Personal relationship

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## Criminal Intent: Prevention Strategies

- Cash Control
- Lighting
- Surveillance and Signage
- Security
- Training on robbery response
- Training on safety equipment
- Training to deal with aggressive, drunk, or otherwise problem individuals

## Customer/Client: Prevention Strategies

- Adequate staffing
- Competency training
- Specific response training
  - Recognizing behavioral cues
  - Violence de-escalation techniques
  - Interpersonal communication skills
  - Proper restraint and take-town techniques

## Co-Worker: Prevention Strategies

- Hiring process
  - Background checks
  - Former employer references
- Training in policies/reporting
  - New-hire orientation
  - Refresher training

## Personal Relationship: Prevention Strategies

- Training in policies and reporting
  - Domestic violence traits and cues
  - Recognize signs of co-workers as victims or perpetrators of domestic violence
- Supportive culture
  - No retaliation for disclosure
  - Confidentiality
  - Safety and security protocols
  - Community service providers

## Higher Risk for Workplace Violence

- Duties that involve the exchange of money, goods, or services
- Duties that involve mobile workplace assignments
- Working with unstable or volatile people in health care, social service or criminal justice settings
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working late at night or during early morning hours
- Working in high-crime areas
- Duties that involve guarding valuable property or possessions
- Working in community-based settings
- Working in a location with uncontrolled public access to the workplace

## What does the law require?

- OSHA: employers must "furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees."
- No specific federal OSHA standard for workplace violence, but the potential exists for such regulations in the future
- California requires a written workplace violence prevention plan, employee training, and more.

## What does the law require?

- Premises liability
- Respondent superior
- Negligence in hiring or retention
- Discrimination and harassment

## Planning for the Worst

- There is no one-size-fits-all plan
- Each plan will need to be tailored to your workforce
  - Company culture
  - Physical layout
  - Resources
  - Management styles
- Focus is on prevention

## Goals of Workplace Violence Prevention

- Keep your workforce safe
- Deter disgruntled insiders or nefarious outsiders from violence by targeting your workforce
- Make sure your workforce is prepared for violence to minimize harm and respond quickly

## Workplace Violence Prevention Basics

- Zero tolerance policy for violence
  - Threats, intimidation, harassment, and physical violence
- Train employees about workplace violence
  - What it is
  - Procedure to report it
- Train supervisors how to recognize the signs of potential workplace violence

## Workplace Violence Prevention Basics

- Assemble an assessment/intervention team
- Train employees on safe evacuation routes, safe hiding spots, and how to interact with law enforcement
- Think about your termination procedures and how to address over risky situations

## Workplace Violence Prevention Plan – Key Components

- Work Environment
- Security
- Education
- Performance/Conduct Indicators
- Employee Support Services
- Early Intervention
- Appropriate Action

## Work Environment

- Maintain a workplace free from negative feelings, isolation, resentment and hostility, by:
  - promoting sincere, open, and timely communication among managers, employees, and union representatives;
  - offering opportunities for professional development;
  - fostering a family-friendly work environment;
  - maintaining mechanisms for complaints and concerns and allowing them to be expressed in a non-judgmental forum that includes timely feedback to the initiator;
  - promoting "quality of life" issues such as facilities and job satisfaction; and
  - maintaining impartial and consistent discipline for employees who exhibit improper conduct and poor performance.

## Security

- Maintaining a secure and physically safe workplace is important
- Consider:
  - On-site security
  - Employee photo identification badges and secure access
  - Safety options for walking to and from parking lots
  - Other appropriate security, as needed, such as metal detectors

## Education

- Training and communication are essential.
- Communicate awareness of workplace violence among employees, supervisors, and managers
- Distribute and train all employees on the company's workplace violence program – what it is, how to respond, early intervention techniques, who to call, etc.
- Provide education on conflict resolution, stress reduction, EAP opportunities

## Performance / Conduct Indicators

- Change in performances and conduct can be warning signs for potential violence.
- Keeping tabs on these issues can assist in early intervention
  - Attendance issues
  - Decreased productivity
  - Concentration Issues
  - Changed behavior
  - Evidence of serious stress, depression
  - Possible drug or alcohol use

## Other Components

- Employee Support Services
  - EAPs and other resources
- Early Intervention
  - How to report it, steps to address concerns
- Appropriate Action
  - How to investigate threats, discipline when needed, handing sensitive situations

## Sample Programs and Policies

- [State Auto](#)
- [Washington State](#)
- [State of California](#)

# Warning Signs

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- Increased use of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Unexplained absenteeism
- Depression/withdrawal
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures
- Mood swings
- Unstable responses
- Explosive outbursts

## Warning Signs

- Disruptive, aggressive, and hostile
- Prolonged anger
- Holding grudges
- Hypersensitive to criticism
- Blaming Others
- Preoccupied with violence
- Change in personality

## Warning Signs

- Significant loss, discipline, financial trouble, termination
- Domestic violence concerns
- Obsession with violent events
- Empathy with violent actors
- Unsolicited comments about firearms, dangerous weapons, violent crimes

## ADDRESSING WARNING SIGNS

## Encourage Reporting

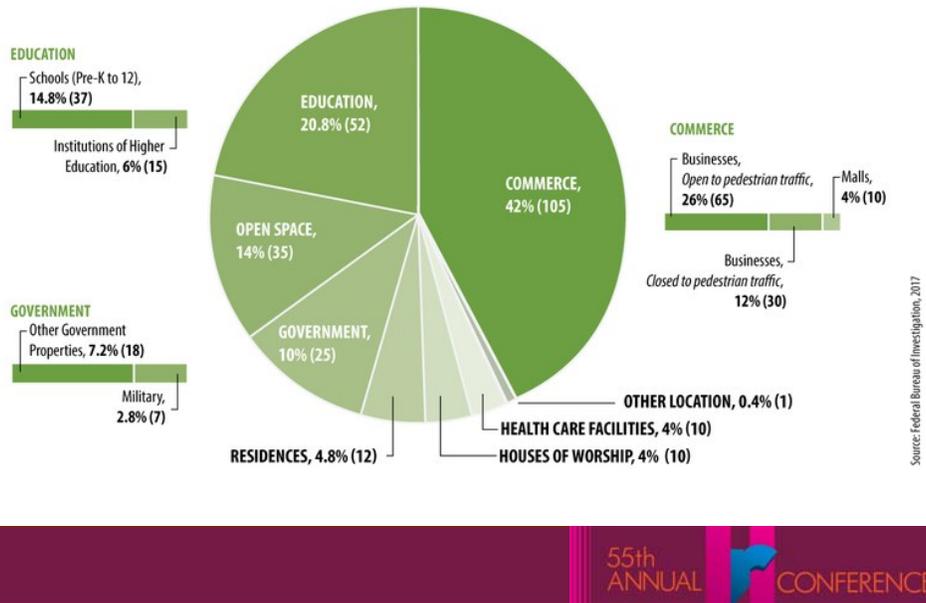
- Encourage employees to report suspicious or threatening behavior
- **If you see something, say something!**
- Take reports seriously and treat them confidentially
- Consider establishing a hotline

## Terminations

- Assess the threat
- Involve legal and security
- Conduct termination immediately
- Take all threats seriously
- Be respectful of the employee
- Reduce contact with others
- Get the employee home safely

## ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATIONS

**Quick Look: 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States From 2000 to 2017**  
**Location Categories**



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## Active Shooter Response

1. RUN
2. HIDE
3. FIGHT

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## Active Shooter: RUN

- Have an escape route and plan in place
- Run even if others stay
- Leave your belongings
- Help others, if you can
- Stop others from heading toward shooter
- Keep hands visible
- Obey police
- Call 911

## Active Shooter: HIDE

- Be out of the shooter's view
- Protect yourself however possible – get into an office, lock doors, barricade doors
- Don't otherwise pin yourself in
- SILENCE your cell phone
- Turn off lights
- Be quiet
- Call 911 – even if you cannot speak

## Active Shooter: FIGHT

- Act aggressively
- Improvise weapons
- Commit to your actions

## Suicidal Employees

- Take threats seriously
- Look for warning signs
- Encourage at-risk employees to seek help
- Refer to EAP, suicide hotline, or hospital
- Call 911

## Domestic Violence

- Ask about protection orders
- Talk with the employee and follow-up
- Have a photo of the abuser
- Relocate the employee in the workplace, if needed
- Maintain privacy
- Escort the employee to and from parking lot
- Consider flexible work schedule

## Other Threats of Violence

- Bomb or arson
  - DHS advises to keep the caller on the line and do not hang up
  - Be polite
  - Signal to other employees to get help
  - Record the call, if possible
- Suspicious mail or packages
  - Do not open
  - Shut off fans
  - Evacuate
  - Contact authorities
  - Wash hands

## Additional Resources

- [DOL Workplace Violence Program](#)
- [OSHA Workplace Violence Prevention Programs](#)
- [FBI: Workplace Violence: Issues in Response](#)
- [Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies and Research Needs](#)
- [Example Workplace Violence Handbook](#)
- [Online Workplace Violence Prevention Course for Nurses](#)
- [NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluations](#)
- [Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention ANSI Standard](#)
- [Building a Safe Workplace: Preventing Workplace Violence Supervisor Training PPT](#)

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