



5 minute safety talk

Workplace Violence

We all deserve to work in a safe environment. Unfortunately, there are situations where violence is present in the workplace. Today, we are going to talk about what to watch for and how to respond to that type of situation.

Workplace violence can occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide. It is one of the leading causes of job-related deaths. Incidents may be triggered by stress, increased workloads, financial problems, firing, or disciplinary actions.

Prevent workplace violence

Some basic planning and preparation strategies can minimize or avoid violent situations in the workplace. Here are some tips to help you stay safe:

- Never underestimate the potential for violence, and take every threat seriously

- Create a supportive environment where violence and disrespectful behavior are not tolerated
- Resolve conflict peacefully. Recognize signs of a troubled coworker, a disgruntled employee, or a victim of domestic abuse
- If you feel threatened by a potential domestic abuser, arrange to walk into and out of work with a group of employees
- Encourage communication of any worrisome situations or suspicious activities
- Seek professional help if you feel threatened in any way
- Work with local law enforcement to protect everyone from internal and external risk
- Design, implement, and communicate a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program

Recognize potentially violent behavior

The following are indicators that can signal the potential risk of violent episodes:

- Sudden and persistent complaining about being treated unfairly
- Blaming of others for personal problems
- Sudden change in behavior, deterioration in job performance

- Statement that he or she would like something bad to happen to a particular individual
- Paranoid behavior
- Sudden increased absenteeism
- Sexually harassing, or obsessing about a coworker: sending unwanted gifts, notes, unwanted calling, stalking
- Increased demand of supervisor's time
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Talking to oneself
- Instability in family relationships
- Financial problems combined with not receiving a raise or promotion
- Poor relationships with coworkers or management
- History of violent behavior
- Previous threats, direct or indirect
- Presenting and talking about reading material that is violent in nature
- Carrying a concealed weapon or flashing one around
- Quiet seething, sullenness
- Refusal to accept criticism about job performance
- Sudden mood swings, depression
- Sudden refusal to comply with rules or refusal to perform duties
- Inability to control feelings, outbursts of rage, swearing, slamming doors, etc.

If violence occurs

If workplace violence does occur, stay calm. Notify authorities as soon as possible. Avoid any aggressive response that may provoke the attacker, such as yelling or arguing. If you can do so safely and without aggravating the situation, evacuate the area.

If a crime was committed, secure the scene for law enforcement. Those affected should seek medical and crisis assistance, and possibly professional counseling. We all want to feel safe at work. If you notice odd behavior or think the safety of your coworkers could be at risk, report it to your supervisor, manager, or a Human Resources representative.