



## Safety Briefing, Workplace Violence of September 11, 2001

Perhaps as we ponder over the events of 9/11, we haven't given a thought to what really took place. Yes the events were a terrorist action, an act of violence against our nation and its citizens, an act of war. But from a safety standpoint, I envision this as the worst case of workplace violence we have ever encountered. No law or rule that OSHA has in place can or could have protected the workers involved in those attacks.

Think about it: the four aircrews were overcome by violent actions within their workplaces perhaps because they did not recognize the signs, or they underestimated their meaning. Security never anticipated that a small razor knife or pocketknife attached to a key chain could be used as a weapon.

The business travelers were engaged in their jobs, moving from one place to another to conduct business. The employees in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were doing their jobs and feeling secure until this violence was introduced into their respective workplaces. The Firemen and Police Officers who responded to the various calls knew they were in harms way, but still went about their assigned tasks.

All of these people went to work on Tuesday, September 11th, looking forward to doing their jobs safely and going home at the end of their shifts to their family or friends. Whether you are a Lineman engaged in hot line work, a truck driver hauling a load of liquid propane, a power plant worker doing safety checks, a technician or meter person driving to your job site, a worker repairing a gas or water line, or an office worker, we must remember that none of us are exempt from workplace violence.

But it is also important to remember that in these times of stress and uncertainty we must remain vigilant in order to insure our own safety, as well as that of those around us.

### **Remember:**

- While engaged in critical tasks, i.e. hot work, switching, etc., turn off news coverage on radios to avoid distractions.
- If you're driving, stay focused on the driving task--if something causes you to lose focus, pull off the traveled portion of the highway and calm down before proceeding.
- Take any threat against yourself, or others seriously. If threatened, try to stay calm, attempt to back out of the situation, and contact your supervisor or authorities immediately.
- Report any suspicious acts or individuals in or around your facilities.
- If threatened, try to remember as many details as you can about the event and individual.
- Practice the buddy system. Watch out for each other, and if your co-worker is unable to stay focused, don't allow him/her to go in harms way.
- Many companies have ECS (Employee Counseling Services) available to their employees and families—use them if you need to.

### **Supervisors:**

- Review your company policy on violence with your employees on a regular basis.
- Review the procedure for contacting ECS with your employees as needed.

- Ralph Little  
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