



RESOURCES

Department of Labor and Industries Safety and Health Hotline
800-423-7233

Bureau of Labor, Safety and Health Statistics
<http://www.bls.gov/iif/>
202-691-6170

National Criminal Justice Reference Service
<http://www.ncjrs.org/>
800-851-3420

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/recognition.html>
1-800-321-OSHA (6742)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/>
1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

>INFOCUS

workplace VIOLENCE

workplace violence

Violence knows no boundaries, and over the years, violence in the workplace has emerged as a disturbing problem. The service industries – such as retail establishments, taxis and limousines, and police and security staff – receive the brunt of Workplace Violence, but they are not alone. Incidents of violence can take place at any workplace.

The facts:

- One in six violent crimes take place at work.
- The leading killer of working females is workplace murder, accounting for 35 percent of their fatal work injuries.
- Workplace murder is the second leading killer of working males.
- Countless other incidents of violence – including harassment, injury, and threats – occur each year, many of which go unreported.
- 30 percent of the victims of workplace violence are confronted with armed offenders.
- 16 percent of workplace violence incidents resulted in physical injury.

What is Workplace Violence?

Any threatening behavior, physical assault, or verbal abuse which takes place in the work setting constitutes Workplace Violence. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), beatings, shootings, suicides, rapes, as well as psychological traumas and harassments of all sorts – such as threats, obscene phone calls, and being followed – are all examples of Workplace Violence. Many incidents of Workplace Violence do not involve force, but rather, the threat of force.

Incidents of Workplace Violence can occur at any location where an employee performs a work-related activity – including parking lots, clients' homes, vehicles used for business purposes, and offices. The perpetrators of Workplace Violence come in many forms. Strangers, customers, clients, and co-workers may be involved in incidents of Workplace Violence. Other people with personal relationships to employees, such as spouses or friends, also become perpetrators of Workplace Violence when their actions take place at the work site.

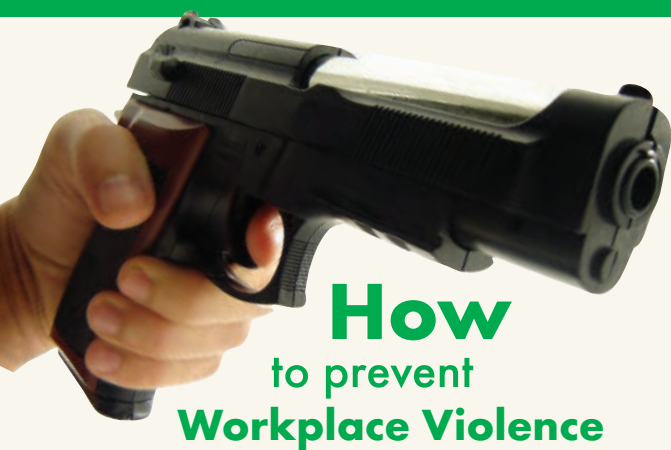


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How to prevent Workplace Violence

Different circumstances make different work environments more at risk for different types of violence. For example, retail services which handle money are more likely at risk for robberies – the most common type of violence perpetrated by strangers. Workplaces where employees' job security is at risk are more prone toward incidents of physical aggression between coworkers. Employees suffering from violent or stressful personal relationships are more likely to be victims of extreme aggression, such as shootings, stabbings, and murder.

Many other factors can heighten the risk of violent incidents. These include: working late at night, working in highly stressful conditions, having potential weapons – such as scissors – easily visible, working after regular work hours or in isolation, poor lighting outside of the workplace, unregulated access into the work site, the absence of a strong and well publicized disciplinary policy, and an inability to quickly communicate with security personnel.

The best way to prevent Workplace Violence from occurring is to reduce the risk factors in the workplace. For example, retail services can post signs stating a minimal amount of cash in the cash register. Individuals with a history of violent behavior can receive counseling services. Other ways to reduce the risk of violence include: posting laws against stalking, assault and other acts of violence, and setting up the workplace so that employees have multiple exits.

Taking Steps to Stop the Violence

All workplaces should have a clear procedure for reporting violent incidents – whether verbal, physical, or threatening. This procedure should be well understood by all employees and available to them in writing. In order for employees to feel comfortable reporting violent incidents – without fearing retribution from coworkers or clients – the procedure should be confidential and supportive.

Find out about the procedure for reporting violent incidents at your workplace. If your workplace does not have a procedure, ask your employer to implement one.

More Ways to Make Your Workplace Safer

- Ask your employer to identify the conditions which make your workplace at risk for violence and to reduce those risks.
- Attend training on how to de-escalate hostile or threatening situations.
- Make sure you understand your workplace's communication procedures in the event of violent incidents.
- Eliminate or reduce the amount of time you work alone or in isolation.



Signs of a Potentially Violent Person

He or she:

- acts confused, bewildered, or distracted
- easily becomes frustrated and impatient
- blames others for his or her problems or finds fault with other people's actions
- visibly and rapidly changes body language
- angrily points fingers, shouts, or pounds fists
- commits hostile acts, such as damaging property or making threats

What to Do if You Suspect a Person May be Violent

- Stay calm.
- Speak and move slowly and with confidence.
- Encourage the person to talk.
- Show the person you are interested in what he or she has to say.
- Acknowledge that the person is upset.
- Provide time for the person to calm down by offering a drink of water.
- Try to break up big problems into more manageable difficulties.
- Sit or stand so that there are physical barriers between you and the person.
- Position your body at an angle, rather than facing the person directly.
- Make sure you have access to an exit.

If you have been a victim of Workplace Violence, or if you detect any signs of violence, follow your workplace's procedures to immediately report these incidents. In the event no procedure exists in your workplace, speak directly to your employer and to your human resources department. Report all violence incidents to the local police department.