

Understanding & Preventing Violence in Our Workplace

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GOALS

- Discuss the leading motives for workplace violence; theory, cause, cost, and sources
- Enhancing awareness, environmental and support structures
- Explore recruitment practices; interviewing, background checks, and references
- Understanding grievance procedures and drug policies and their connection to safe workplaces
- Use of Threat/Violence Assessment Teams
- Post-incident response to workplace violence

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE DEFINED

- Behavior and actions that would lead a reasonable and prudent person to interpret a potential for violence
- Violent acts against a person at work or on-duty that includes physical assault (rape, sexual assault, aggravated and simple assault) and robbery
- Credible threats of violence...

MOST EFFECTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST WORKPLACE

Awareness and Prevention

Combine preventive human resource practices with close attention to warning signs of violent behavior

BACKGROUND & CAUSATION

- Between 1992 – 1996, more than 2 million U.S. residents were victims of a violent crime while they were at work or on-duty
- US companies spend \$4.2B/year due to workplace violence
- More than 1000 homicides occur at work each year (20 per week)
- Most common type of workplace victimization was simple assault (1.5 million each year)
- U.S. Residents suffered 51,000 rapes and sexual assaults and about 84,000 robberies while they were at work (1992-1996)
- Intimates were identified by the victims as the perpetrators of about 1% of all workplace violent crime
- Domestic Violence is the 3rd leading source of conflict leading to death in the workplace

Northwest National Life Institute for Occupational Safety & Health Study

- 19% of workers report being harassed at work
- 7% reported threats of physical harm at work
- 3% report being physically attacked
- 88% of workers say they are psychologically affected
- 62% of workers say their work life is disrupted
- 23% say they become physically sick over it

Law Suits

Employers are often sued as a result of WPV under the following legal strategies:

1. Negligent Hiring

2. Negligent Retention

FACTORS THAT PUT SOMEONE AT RISK FOR

- Interacting with the public
- Exchanging money
- Delivering services and goods
- Working late at night or during early morning hours
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working in high-crime areas
- Working in community-based settings
- Guarding valuables or property
- Dealing with volatile situations or violent people

WARNING SIGNS

- History of violence or threats of violence
- Intimidating Behavior
- Threats/Abuse directed at objects
- Romantic obsessions
- Chemical dependency (alcohol or drugs)

WARNING SIGNS

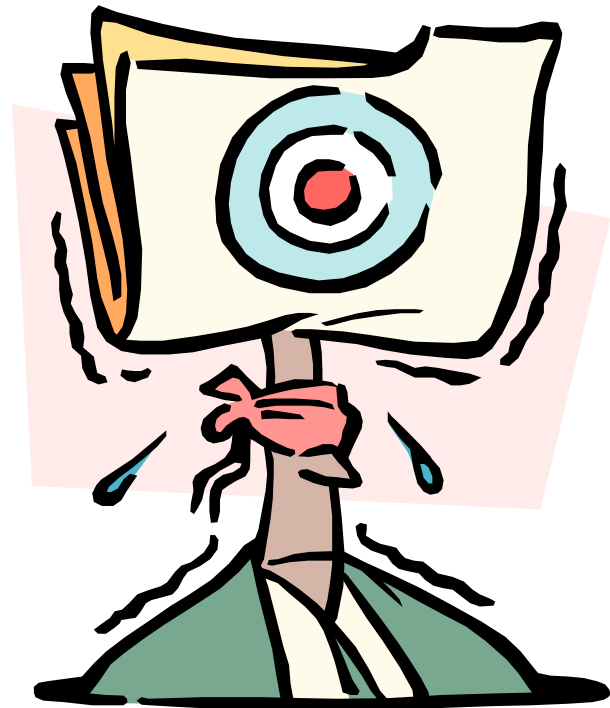
- Extreme stress
- Decrease in productivity and/or inconsistent work patterns
- Elevated frustration with the environment; Major changes in mood
- Interests and fascination with weapons; easy access
- Minimal support systems

WHY AREN'T THREATS REPORTED?

- Naïveté
- Unaware of process for reporting
- Unaware of appropriate resources
- Unaware of value of reporting
- Lack of confidence in responders
- Fear of being blamed
- Embarrassment, guilt or shame
- Fear of retaliation

WHAT LEADS SOMEONE TO BECOME VIOLENT?

- Stress
- Thoughts
- Emotional Reaction
- Taking Action



WE CAN ASSESS THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE

1. Hiring
2. When it spills into workplace (conflict with customer, co-worker, etc.)
3. During major changes in the workplace (downsizing, moving, process reengineering)
4. Through on-going counseling of employee (troubled)
5. During normal course of employment

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY

- Zero Tolerance for threats and actual violence, and consequences for such actions
- Recommend a policy that mandates the reporting of every potential instance of violence by an employee, manager, customer or vendor
- Creation of a threat assessment team
- Reporting mechanisms without fear of reprisal...

OTHER POLICIES TO CONSIDER...

- Grievance Policy
- Performance Appraisal Policy
- Drug Free Workplace Policy
- EAP (confidential) to deal with emotional, substance abuse, marital and financial problems...

RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

- Consider background checks (pros/cons)
- Always verify past employment
- Conduct an interview (works with discipline issues, also)
- Make any job offer contingent on passing a drug and alcohol test (controversial...)
- Screen contract personnel against these same safety standards, or demand they meet the same standards

THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

- Who is on it?
- How are they organized?
- When do they meet?



WHAT THE TEAM DOES

- Assess the situation
- Develop an action plan / intervention
- Act
- Review and Refine



DEFINING THREATS

- Direct Threats
- Conditional Threats
- Veiled Threats



AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

- Aberrational...
- Periodic Anger...
- Endemic...



STEPS TO TAKE

- Demonstrate concern and caring for those who have been harmed by the trauma
- Open up communications channels and control rumors
- Assess your personnel and business requirements in order to restore business performance
- Arrange for your post-trauma team to return to your workplace on a periodic basis to counsel and debrief employees

HOW TO CONTACT...

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