



Safety Bulletin
May 2025

Workplace Violence Awareness & Prevention – Do Not Be a Victim.

Every April, organizations across the United States recognize Workplace Violence Awareness. A crucial time to highlight the risks of workplace violence and the steps necessary to prevent it. The goal of increasing awareness to recognize, prevent, and respond to workplace violence is an employer's responsibility. In California there was more emphasis being placed on worker safety via SB 553 - California Labor Code Section 6401.9 which was signed into law on September 2023 and became effective July 1, 2024. Employers across state still have not updated their plans or provided training to their employees which could result in an OSHA fine.

Workplace violence, whether a violent criminal act or verbal threat, affects employees throughout the workforce. Violence prevention programs should set clear goals and objectives to prevent workplace violence. Events across the country and what seems like one act of violence after another, have led many employees, at all levels in their agencies, to become fearful of similar attacks at their workplaces. The recent WPV attacks illustrate the need for having a Workplace Violence Prevention Policy in place including employee training.



According to OSHA's guidelines, training all workers can:

"Help raise the overall safety and health knowledge across the workforce, provide employees with the tools needed to identify workplace safety and security hazards, and address potential problems before they arise and ultimately reduce the likelihood of workers being assaulted."

All workers should understand the "universal precautions for violence" meaning, "violence should be expected but can be avoided or mitigated through preparation."

Identifying the Four Types of Workplace Violence

Workplace threats – which can range from verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide – can be both internal (originating from a co-worker, supervisor, or customer) or external (stemming from a family member or stranger). Law enforcement and workplace experts describe workplace violence as typically falling into four types, based on the relationship among victims, offenders, and work settings. These categories are:

Criminal intent. In this kind of violent incident, the offenders have no legitimate relationship to the victim or the organization. Instead, they enter a workplace to commit robbery or another crime.

Customer/client. This type occurs when the violent person has a relationship with the

business – such as a disgruntled customer who receives services from the company (for example, in retail, health, or service industries).

Worker on worker. These incidents involve current or former employees committing violence toward their present or past places of employment.

Personal/domestic relationship. Violence committed in the workplace by someone who does not work there but has a personal relationship with an employee who does – such as an abusive spouse or domestic partner.

Risk management strategy should focus on relevant workplace violence risks in a manner that satisfies the organization's risk appetite while tending matters of operational needs, culture, branding, and budget.

OSHA defines workplace violence as “any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.” OSHA estimates that about two million workers report violent workplace incidents each year. The actual number of incidents is thought to be much higher as many events probably do not get reported.

Understanding the Causes of Workplace Violence

When workplace violence occurs, similar themes emerge concerning the underlying causes and the backgrounds of the perpetrators.

Nearly half were motivated by a personal grievance related to the workplace, domestic, or other issue. Over half had histories of criminal charges, mental health symptoms, and/or illicit substance use or abuse.

All had at least one significant stressor within the last five years, and over half had indications of financial instability in that timeframe.

More than 75 percent made concerning communications or elicited concern from others prior to carrying out their attacks. On average, those who prompted concerns caused more harm than those who did not.

Understanding these types of clues may help employers react proactively – for example, preventive measures such as Employee Assistance Programs or community counseling services can automatically be implemented if employees exhibit certain symptoms or behaviors.

The best protection employers can offer is to take the initiative to reduce the exposure of workplace violence. That includes, but is not limited to, adopting a zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence against or by their employees.

Secure the workplace. Where appropriate, embrace current technology such as video surveillance, extra lighting, and alarm systems. Minimize access by outsiders by requiring identification badges, electronic keys, and security guards.

Prevent financial temptation. Provide drop safes to limit the amount of cash on hand, and keep a minimal amount of cash in registers, safes, or petty cash boxes during evenings and late-night hours.

Protect field staff. If your agency employs off-site, traveling, or field workers, equip them with cell phones, radios, and consider hand-held alarms or noise devices as well. Require them to prepare a daily work plan and keep a contact person informed of their location throughout the day.

Anticipate the need for extra safety. Instruct employees not to enter any location where they feel unsafe. To help ensure security, a great tip is to introduce a “buddy system” among employees – or provide an escort service or police assistance in potentially dangerous situations or at night.

The California Labor Code Section 6400, which governs workplace safety, states that “Every employer shall furnish employment and a place of employment that is safe and healthful for the employees therein.” ... Employers are required to develop and implement an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) for employees.

Employers are required to perform a risk assessment any time a risk of workplace violence is present. This guide presents a four-step process to help employers complete a workplace violence risk assessment:

1. Identify the hazard.
2. Evaluate the risk.
3. Find a solution.
4. Implement/make recommendations.



ICRMA has assessment tools available and will conduct site safety assessments for each member as it relates to Workplace Violence. All members should have a Workplace Violence Policy in place. Contact Bob May, Director of Loss Control, for additional information and training.