



Safety Bulletin  
April 2024

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

April is National Workplace Violence Prevention Awareness Month - with the goal of increasing awareness to recognize, prevent, and respond to workplace violence. This year there is 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 becomes effective July 1, 2024.

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.

According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), workplace violence typically falls into one of four categories:

Type I – Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace but enter to commit robbery or another crime.

Type II – Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or any others for whom an organization provides services.

Type III – Violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers by a present or former employee.

Type IV – Violence committed in the workplace by someone who does not work there but has a personal relationship with an employee—an abusive spouse or domestic partner.

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 2 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, according to an in-depth review, in 2021-2022, assaults resulted in 57,610 injuries and 525 fatalities, according to Injury Facts.

Nearly half were motivated by a personal grievance related to a 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 be initiative-taking to 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 company employs off-site, traveling, or field workers, equip them with cell phones 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.

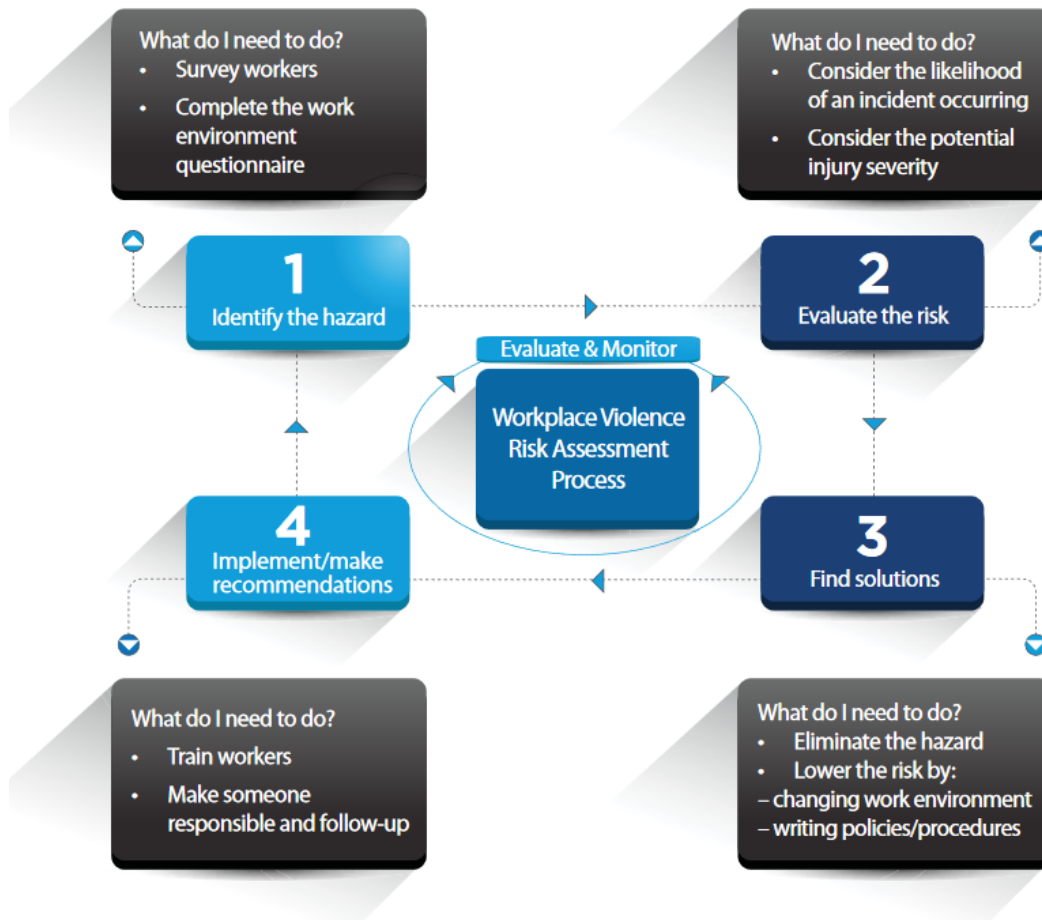
The California Labor Code Section 6400, which governs workplace safety, states that “Every employer shall furnish employment and a place of employment that is safe and healthful for the employees therein.” ... Employers are required to develop and implement an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP)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

# Workplace Violence Risk Assessment

## Four-Step Process



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.