How You Can Prevent Violence in Your Workplace



Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Workplace violence can happen anywhere, any time. It can come from a co-worker or a stranger. And it isn't limited to physical assault. Workplace violence is any form of threatening or disruptive behavior. It can be as simple as a gesture, such as a raised fist, or as complicated as sabotage

What's the Danger?

Every year about two million workers in the US experience workplace violence. The situation is similar in Canada, where 17 percent of all self-reported incidents of violence, including sexual assault, physical assault and robbery, occur in the workplace.

It seems almost weekly there is another horrific, headline marking story of a violent incident at a workplace. In addition to these newsmaking events, countless other violent incidents occur daily in the workplace. They may not make the headlines, but they are no less traumatic for the victims involved.

How to Protect Yourself

Before people explode in violence at work, they may give signals that something is wrong. Here are 10 warning signs that trouble might be brewing:

1. Social isolation
2. Decrease in personal hygiene
3. Complaints of unfair treatment
4. Excessive lateness or absenteeism
5. Faulty decision-making
6. Blaming others for mistakes
7. Inappropriate comments about revenge, violence or weapons
8. Disrespect for authority
9. Swearing
10. Overreacting to criticism

Here are 10 precautions workers can take to minimize or prevent violence on the job:

1. Don't get drawn into arguments.
2. Take verbal threats seriously, but don't respond to them.

3. Report all threats, incidents of bullying, and harassment to your supervisor or the company’s security department.
4. Watch for unauthorized visitors, even those who appear to have legitimate business at your plant.
5. Don’t give out information about fellow employees.
6. Keep doors locked before your business officially opens and after closing time.
7. Always have access to communication devices so you can notify someone for help.
8. Some workplaces have predetermined code words so one employee can tell another about a dangerous customer or visitor without tipping off the suspect.
9. Wear your identification badge as instructed, and never lend your key or entry card to anyone.
10. Trust your instincts. They act as your early warning system.

Final Word

Knowing the warning signs for potentially violent behavior and precautions and actions to take in response to threats and incidents, will go a long way toward ensuring your safety and to curbing violence in your workplace