

Resources and Tips for Preventing Workplace Violence



TIPS FOR PREVENTING
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace homicides accounted for 30% of the 4,764 fatal workplace injuries that happened in the U.S. in 2020, according to the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI). Workplace violence is a serious issue that impacts the lives of millions of U.S. workers each year. Employers and managers must take preventive measures to protect the possibility of workplace violence and ensure employee safety.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE STATISTICS

Workplace violence is "any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site." According to the U.S. Department of Labor, "It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide."

NONFATAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

From 2015 to 2019:

- Approx. 5.2 million U.S. workers reported being victims of nonfatal workplace violence
- Eight related crimes were reported for every 1,000 workers
- 1,845 out of every 1,000 government employees reported being victims of simple assault
- Chargers convicted 47% of nonfatal incidents
- The victim was injured in 12% of nonfatal incidents
- 15% of victims suffered severe emotional distress due to the incident
- Healthcare-related nonfatal incidents resulting from workplace violence were treated in hospital emergency rooms
 - 33% treated for contusions and abrasions
 - 17% treated for sprains and strains
 - 14% treated for traumatic brain injuries

WORKPLACE HOMICIDES BY METHOD (2015-2019)

Shooting	79%
Stabbing, cutting, piercing or slashing	9%
Beating, hitting or striking	7%
Multiple acts	2%
Strangulation	1%

SITUATIONS WITH INCREASED RISK OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- The gender is male
- The risk increases greatly when employees are engaged with the public, such as sales, or provide services and care
- The victim was a high crime rate

JOBS WITH INCREASED RISK OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Delivery drivers
- Construction workers
- Health care professionals
- Law enforcement
- Public service workers

In 2020, homicide was the fourth most common cause of fatal workplace injuries in the country (after heart disease, cancer, and COVID-19).

Workplace fatalities by type

- 100 fatalities caused by violence and injury due to other people or animals

Top fatalities by job role

- Health: 132
- Government services: 132
- Law enforcement: 72
- Public administration: 68

WARNING SIGNS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

While clear warning signs don't always precede workplace violence, it may be possible to interrupt violent escalation by paying attention to indications of troubled or disgruntled employees.

WORK-RELATED SIGNS

- Increased work quality
- Reduced productivity and attendance
- Excessive drinking
- Disrespectful for authority

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

- Peer problems
- Inappropriate language
- Social isolation
- Uncharacteristic change in behavior

PHYSICAL/NONVERBAL SIGNS

- Stare
- Pinched face
- Violent gestures
- Personal space violation

OTHER WARNING SIGNS

- Personal history of violence
- Threatening or intimidating behavior, such as written or verbal threats
- Increases in personal stress
- Substance misuse

SOME BEHAVIORAL SIGNS MAY ALSO BE INDICATIVE OF OTHER ISSUES (NOT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE)

- Depression
- Substance use
- Stress

IMPACT OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE ON WORKFORCE

- Psychological damage
- Loss of staff
- Increased security measures and related costs
- Property damage

TIPS FOR PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Employers and managers have easy and free access to many government resources that can help stop a workplace incident before it starts.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA) TIPS FOR PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Install in security systems
- Provide employee safety training
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence
- Discourage employees to report unsafe behaviors
- Provide a "buddy system" or similar peer support system
- OSHA also provides reference materials to prevent general workplace violence, as well as policies to help employers, including the following:

LEVELS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Level One: Early warning signs (distress, anxiety, and communication problems and attitudes)
- Level Two: Escalation (increased anger, hostility, verbal abuse, etc.)
- Level Three: Further escalation (threatening, intimidating, or violent behavior)

TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Response to early warning signs

- Observing and documenting behavior
- Reporting concerns to the appropriate level of supervision
- Supervisor meeting with the employee in question in a private area
- Supervisor should directly identify problem, ask for employee input and establish a time frame for resolution

Response to escalation

- Documenting observed behavior
- Calling 911 if necessary
- Immediately ending the appropriate work contact, such as suspension
- Reporting criminal activity, if possible
- Supervisor meeting with the employee in question in a private area
- Supervisor should call relevant agencies regarding the situation
- What are the employee's rights to legal self-defense?
- How can the supervisor help?
- What does the employee need to achieve by ending work?

Response to further escalation

- Calling 911
- Immending calls
- Immediately ending the appropriate work contact, such as a supervisor
- Securing personal safety
- Leaving the area if doing may compromise safety
- Cooperating with law enforcement

MAINTAIN A SAFE, SECURE WORKPLACE

Thanks to the efforts of government agencies and employers, workplace homicide deaths have decreased significantly in the past few decades. Safety, science and emergency management personnel must address the challenges of developing emergency protective procedures to keep workplaces safe and secure.

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