

Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies for Employers FactSheet

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Homicide

The number of workplace homicides recorded in 2004 was down sharply from the number reported in 2003. The 551 workplace homicides in 2004 represented a 13 percent decline from 2003 and was the lowest annual total yet recorded by the fatality census. Overall, workplace homicides are down 49 percent from the high of 1,080 workplace homicides recorded in 1994 (excluding the 2,886 work-related homicides resulting from terrorist attacks of September 11). *Census of Occupational Injuries Summary, 2004.*

Most workplace homicides are committed during the course of a robbery, while only 9 percent are committed by coworkers or former employees. Firearms are used to commit 76 percent of all workplace homicides.

Although there has been much focus on countering terrorism, workplace violence is one of the most significant yet least recognized problems facing many organizations. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates the economic cost of workplace violence nationwide at around \$121 billion a year. Nonfatal workplace assaults alone result in more than 876,000 lost workdays and \$16 million in lost wages and occur to men and women in almost equal rates.

High Risk Occupations

While anyone can become a victim of workplace violence, some industries and occupations are at much greater risk for violence and assault. Taxicab services, liquor stores, detective and protective services, commercial gas stations, and retail jewelry stores are the industries with greatest homicide risks. The occupations at greatest risk of homicide are cab drivers, chauffeurs, sheriffs, bailiffs, police and detectives, gas station and garage employees, and security guards. Nonfatal assaults occur most often in service and retail trades, or more specifically in nursing homes, social services, hospitals, grocery stores, and eating and drinking establishments.



Strategies

To counter the possibility of violence in the workplace, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has developed a number of strategies to reduce the risk of workplace violence. Employers can use the following strategies to improve awareness and prevention of violence in the workplace:

- a policy statement;
- threat assessment;
- hazard assessment;
- workplace security analysis;
- workplace survey;
- control and prevention;
- training and education;
- incident prevention and investigation; and
- recordkeeping.

Not every strategy is appropriate for every workplace, so employers and employees should use the strategies appropriate to their workplace.

Policy Statement: this may address purpose and scope of the policy, definitions of workplace threats and violence, and consequences for violations.

Threat Assessment Team: this team may represent all areas and levels of the company, and will assess the vulnerability of the workplace and reach agreement on preventive actions to be taken.

Hazard assessment: the Threat Assessment Team will take into consideration the following areas in assessing hazards:

- OSHA logs;
- incident reports;
- assaults or near-assaults;
- insurance records;
- police records;
- accident investigations;
- training records;
- grievances; and
- other

Workplace security analysis: the Threat Assessment Team will analyze the potential hazards, inspect the workplace, and review at-risk work tasks to include:

- exchange of money with public;
- working alone or in small numbers;
- working late night or early morning;
- guarding valuable property or possessions;
- working in community settings; and
- staffing levels.

Workplace survey: the Threat Assessment Team will conduct surveys and analyze:

- employee survey results; and
- inspection survey results.

Control and prevention: the Threat Assessment Team will make recommendations for:

- engineering controls;
- building vulnerabilities;
- work area design; and
- procedures and policies.

Training and education: training will be conducted for employees, supervisors and managers every two years on the following topics:

- review of and definition of workplace violence;
- program description;
- reporting instructions;
- recognition and response;
- security hazard identification; and
- review of security equipment and procedures, defusing hostile situations, emergency response, post incident procedures.

Incident prevention and investigation: all reported incidents will be evaluated by the Threat Assessment Team to determine program revisions and security reassessment.

Recordkeeping: accurate records will be kept on the following:

- all incidents of workplace violence;
- lost-time injuries with doctor and supervisor reports as needed;
- verbal and physical abuse, aggressive behavior; and
- Threat Assessment Team meeting minutes.

Expanded examples of the above recommendations can be found at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) at their website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>