A Prevention-Oriented Approach to Protecting Your Employees and Workplace

A PRIMER FOR EMPLOYERS AND MANAGERS
Employers and managers take the lead, but preventing workplace violence is a shared responsibility.

The risk of workplace violence is pervasive. It does not discriminate between C-suites and cubicles. Unlike other high-level corporate concerns, violence in the workplace can impact anyone, anytime, anywhere in the organization.

Preventing such acts is a responsibility shared by every employee – and contractor, for that matter – from the top down and the bottom up.

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Workplace violence affects more than half of U.S. organizations. 70% have no or insufficient programs and policies in place to combat it.

Workplace violence is a specific category of violent crime that calls for distinct responses from employers, law enforcement and the community.

- Workplace Violence: Issues in Response, FBI

The Cost of Violence

Nearly two million American employees are victims of workplace violence each year. This sobering statistic from the Bureau of Labor offers ample cause for concern. But the stakes get even higher when you consider the probability that these numbers are grossly underreported.

The human cost of these violent acts is immeasurable. The financial impact can cripple a business. Medical bills covering physical and psychological support for victims and witnesses, liability expenses, negligence lawsuits and physical site damage can be extensive.

Recovery can bring a second wave of impacts – especially with the indirect costs of productivity losses as employees struggle to regain a sense of security, confidence and morale. This lack of assurance can lead to further casualties as clients and partners choose to disassociate in response to reputational damage or negative publicity.
Addressing a Range of Concerning Behavior

Workplace violence includes but is not limited to physical violence, threats or threatening behavior communicated through verbal, written, electronic or physical means.

Growing awareness of the connection between workplace violence and domestic violence has elevated priorities related to protective measures for employee victims of abuse. It is just one issue among a range of threats along the continuum of concerning behavior. An effective workplace violence prevention program should address them all.

Four out of ten supervisors are aware of at least one employee facing domestic violence issues.

The cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence that spills into the workplace: $727 million.

For employers who fail to prevent workplace violence, jury awards in liability cases average $3.1 million per person, per incident.


Preventing Workplace Violence Helps Employees Feel Secure and Creates a Stronger Business

Taking an all-in approach to workplace violence prevention is vital to protecting people, property, performance and reputation. Aligning security and safety with strategic business issues such as production and profitability brings broad business benefits.

• Increased workplace and employee security
• Early identification of red flags – and opportunities to intervene
• Greater cross-functional collaboration and information sharing
• Higher employee morale, better productivity
• Lower risks of lawsuits and settlements
• Getting appropriate mental health care for a subject
• Uninterrupted business operations
• Stronger enterprise risk management
The Employer’s Role in Violence Prevention

A comprehensive safety and security program incorporates plans, policies and procedures related to workplace violence prevention, business continuity, operational resilience, active shooter and emergency preparedness and crisis management.

1. Gain a baseline understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in your current policy
   Conduct a workplace violence prevention gap analysis that evaluates current strengths, resources and processes in legal, compliance HR, security and other departments and identifies the best opportunities to improve them.

2. Advance the company’s ability to prevent, mitigate and respond to incidents
   • Craft workplace violence prevention policies and protocols
   • Synchronize and align your personnel, security and safety policies
   • Develop and deliver distinct training curriculum for the general workforce, managers and the threat assessment team
   • Focus on awareness as the vital first line of defense

Employers must maintain “a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm ...”

- OSHA/MOSHA
3. Incorporate threat assessment into your plan
   - Establish a threat assessment team
   - Be prepared to conduct a behavioral threat assessment, if needed
   - When necessary, seek assistance from specialists including threat assessment experts, clinical psychologists and other professionals as well as social services, mental health and law enforcement entities

4. Factor in best practices in emergency preparedness planning
   - Develop an emergency management plan (EMP) that is aligned with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS)
   - Conduct assessments of physical and technical security capabilities as well as facility-specific risks, threats and vulnerabilities
   - Update physical and technical security to conform with best practices
   - Ensure your EMP includes a detailed active shooter incident response plan
   - Practice emergency response including liaison and involvement from first responders
   - Establish a business continuity plan to improve your ability to anticipate, resist, absorb, adapt and recover quickly from unforeseen, unplanned events

Key Components of an Effective Workplace Violence Policy

- Courtesy, Respect and Safety
- Zero Tolerance
- Action and Enforcement
- Notification of Protective and Restraining Orders
See Something, Say Something

Identifying and responding to warning behaviors is a key component of an effective workplace violence prevention program.

The opportunity to take proper actions following the report of a potential threat substantially increases the ability of a company to mitigate the potential for violence or prevent it altogether.

Maintaining the privacy of the reporter and employee is important. The goal is to maintain a safe and positive working environment – not discipline.

The Employee’s Role in the Prevention Effort

- Accept and adhere to an employer’s preventive policies and practices
- Learn about the warning signs and what constitutes concerning behaviors and situations
- Report concerns to a person in authority – manager, supervisor, HR, Security, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), ethics hotline
- Overcome the tendency to ignore and dismiss inappropriate behaviors by co-workers
Hillard Heintze is one of the leading security risk management firms in the United States. We help organizations and senior leaders protect their people, performance, interests and reputations. We help you create and sustain a safe and secure workplace that prevents acts of targeted violence, mitigates risks and advances business and mission objectives. We do this by providing insight, delivering assurance and instilling confidence.

For more information, contact:
Howard Fisher, Esq., Senior Vice President, Strategic Relationships
howard.fisher@hillardheintze.com
(312) 229-9882

Matthew Doherty, Senior Vice President, Security Risk Management
matthew.doherty@hillardheintze.com
(202) 306-6530

For more thought leadership and collateral on workplace violence prevention, threat assessment and active shooter planning, visit www.hillardheintze.com/workplace-violence-prevention-programs.