What Is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting.
Definition

Workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. A workplace may be any location either permanent or temporary where an employee performs any work-related duty.

Definition Cont’d

This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, clients’ homes and traveling to and from work assignments.

Workplace Violence Includes:

- Beatings
- Stabbings
- Suicides
- Shootings
- Rapes
- Near-suicides
- Psychological traumas
- Threats or obscene phone calls
- Intimidation
- Harassment of any nature
- Being followed, sworn or shouted at
Examples

- Verbal threats to inflict bodily harm; including vague or covert threats
- Attempting to cause physical harm; striking, pushing and other aggressive physical acts against another person

Types of Workplace Violence

- Violence by strangers
- Violence by customers or clients
- Violence by co-workers
- Violence by personal relations

Extent of Problem

We live in an increasingly violent culture

- Job-related homicides were the third leading cause of death for all workers.
- The #1 cause of occupational death for all female workers.
- The #2 cause of occupational death for male workers.
Economic Impact of Workplace Violence

- Cost 500,000 employees 1,175,100 lost work days each year
- Lost wages: $55 million annually
- Lost productivity, legal expenses, property damage, diminished public image, increased security: $ billions

New York State Workplace Violence Prevention Act

On June 7, 2006 New York State passed legislation, Article 27-b of the Labor Law, that requires public employers to perform a workplace evaluation or risk assessment at each worksite and to develop and implement programs to prevent and minimize workplace violence.

Number of Violent Acts to Government Workers in New York State

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<th>2003</th>
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<td>Assaults &amp; Violent Acts for NYS Employees</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>1900</td>
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<td>Assaults &amp; Violent Acts for NYS Local Governments</td>
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Methods Used For Hazard Prevention and Control

Could Include:
- Make high risk areas more visible
- Install more lighting
- Use drop safes, decrease cash on hand
- Post signs – stating limited cash
- Train employees on conflict resolution
- Need a system to respond

Engineering Controls
- Visibility and lighting
- Drop safes
- Video surveillance
- Height markers
- Door detectors, buzzers
- Alarms
- Bullet resistant barriers

Administrative and Work Practice Controls
- Lock delivery doors
- Establish rules for workers leaving facility
- Lock doors when not open, procedures for opening and closing
- Limit access
- Adopt safety procedures for off-site work
**Administrative and Work Practice Controls**

- State clearly to patients, clients, and employees that violence will not be tolerated or permitted
- Establish liaison with local police and state prosecutors
- Require employees to report all assaults and threats
- Set up trained response teams to respond to emergencies

**Administrative and Work Practice Controls**

- Integrate violence prevention into daily procedures
- Minimal cash in register
- Emergency procedures, systems of communication
- Procedures to use barriers & enclosures
- Evaluate staffing needs for high risk locations/times

**Management Commitment and Employee Involvement**

- Complementary and essential
- Management commitment provides the motivating force to deal effectively with workplace violence
- Employee involvement and feedback enable workers to develop and express their commitment to safety and health
**Employee Involvement**

- Understand and comply with the workplace violence prevention program and other safety and security measures
- Participate in employee complaints or suggestion procedures covering safety and security concerns
- Prompt and accurate reporting of violent incidents

**Post-Incident Response**

- Trauma-crisis counseling
- Critical incident stress debriefing
- Employee assistance programs to assist victims

**Training and Education**

- Initially or upon assignment and annually thereafter
- Review of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program
- Risk Factors
- Methods for employees to protect themselves
- Controls/procedures put in place by the employer
Training and Education

Employees should understand concept of “Universal Precautions for Violence” - i.e., that violence should be expected but can be avoided or mitigated through preparation.

Employees should be instructed to limit physical interventions in workplace altercations unless designated emergency response team or security personnel are available.

Training and Education

Training program should involve all employees, including supervisors and managers.

Training and Education

- Workplace violence prevention policy
- Risk factors that cause or contribute to assaults
- Early recognition of escalating behavior or warning signs
- Ways to prevent volatile situations
- Standard response action plan for violent situations
- Location and operation of safety devices
Recordkeeping and Evaluation

- Recordkeeping and evaluation of the violence prevention program are necessary to determine overall effectiveness and identify deficiencies or changes that should be made.

Recordkeeping

- DOSH Log of Injury and Illness (SH 900)
- Reports of work injuries from assaults
- Incidents of abuse, verbal attacks or aggressive behavior
- Information on patients with history of violence
- Minutes of safety meetings, records of hazard analyses and corrective actions
- Records of all training programs

Evaluation

- Establish uniform violence reporting system and regular review of reports
- Review reports of minutes from staff meetings on safety issues
- Analyze trends and rates in illness/injury or fatalities caused by violence
- Measure improvement based on lowering frequency and severity of workplace violence
In Summary

- Risk Evaluation
- WPVPP (> 20 employees, must be written)
  - List of Risk Factors
  - Control Methods
- Information and Training
  - Initial Assignment
  - Annually Thereafter

Additional Resources

- NYS DOL Safety and Health website
  - http://www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/safetyhealth/DOSH_INDEX.shtml
- NIOSH
  - http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/injurytraumaviolence.html
- FBI