

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Workplace Violence

Perhaps workplace violence can't be totally eliminated, but there are things that can be done to minimize it. Awareness and preparation are key factors.

Evaluate the security of all work sites, establish a security plan for each location, and update the plan on a regular basis. The chance of violence is greater for certain jobs including jobs of contact with the public, working in late or early hours, exchanging money, delivering goods or services, high stress jobs, high crime areas, and if working alone or in small numbers.

Initiate Safety Measures. Increase security with alarms, closed-circuit cameras or guards. Lock doors to limit public access. Increase visibility with lighted entrances and exists. Shield workers with windows, partitions or high and wide counters. Alter cash handling policies or install drop safes. Arrange furniture so workers can't be trapped by an attacker. Remove potential weapons from desktops (scissors, staplers, and paperweights).

Hire responsibly. No one should be hired without a reference check.

Clearly communicate company policy about violence and reprisals. Employee manuals should clearly explain what behavior is acceptable, what is not, and what will be done by whom, if violence occurs. It should contain written criteria for reporting incidents and repercussions if an incident occurs. Employer response should be predictable and consistent.

Create clear levels of authority and procedures for dealing with the risk of and response to violence in advance. If a threat of violence is identified, potential victims or targets should be alerted along with others who may be affected, such as supervisors or front office personnel.

Train workers to recognize early signs of potential violence. The most commonly mentioned warning signs are: a history of violent behavior, an obsession with weapons, carrying a concealed weapon, verbal threats of harm, being paranoid, being a loner, obsessive involvement with the job, holding a grudge, workplace physical actions, bizarre comments or expressing extreme desperation over recent family, financial or personal problems. Employees should take all threats seriously and report any bizarre or suspicious behavior.

Give workers training in nonviolent response techniques and conflict resolution, to reduce the risk of volatile situations leading to physical violence. Training should also be given in how to respond to a violent situation.

Workplace violence takes a toll on both employers and employees. It affects not only those assaulted, but also those who are witnesses. It can negatively affect the future reputation of a business.

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Preparing to Deal with Workplace Violence

SITUATION	CHARACTERISTICS	ACTION	RESPONSE	GOOD TO KNOW
Aggressive Customer Behavior	Loud voice, sarcasm, foul language, slurred speech, demeaning threatening	Stay calm, speak slowly; allow for venting; offer to get customer help from supervisor	If action fails, get help	Don't overreact, become defensive or argue. Activate office response plan.
Bomb Threat (telephonic)	Do not interrupt caller as he/she leaves message	After message is delivered, note the following with as many details as possible: 1. Time/Date 2. Time/date bomb to explode 3. Location of bomb 4. Describe bomb 5. Why was it placed? 6. Group affiliation 7. Voice on phone: male, female, old, young, tone, etc. 8. Background noise 9. Caller's words 10. Time call ended	Contact Security	Listen for clues; stay calm; try to let a co-worker know. Activate office response plan.
Telephone Threats	May include loud abusive language	Take notes of all details; Record time/date, who is being threatened, caller's exact words, description of voice, background noise, reason you think call was made, time call ended	Signal a co-worker to notify police or security	Stay Calm Activate office response plan.
Mail/Packages	1. Odd markings 2. Excessive postage 3. Handwritten, incorrect titles 4. Title but no name 5. Misspelling 6. Stains/Discoloration 7. No Return Address	Do not touch or move envelope or package	Request Assistance	Never touch or disturb a suspicious package or object. Activate office response plan.

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	8. Excessive Weight 9. Rigid Envelope 10. Lopsided or uneven envelope or package 11. Objects sticking out of envelope or package 12. Excessive tape, string or other wrappings, visual distractions			
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This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.