

Safety Corner

DETECT, DEFUSE AND PROTECT: HOW TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Workplace violence is violence or the threat of violence against workers. It can occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide, one of the leading causes of job-related deaths. However it manifests itself, workplace violence is a growing concern for employers and employees nationwide.

HOW CAN THE EMPLOYEES PROTECT THEMSELVES?

Nothing can guarantee that an employee will not become a victim of workplace violence. These steps, however, can help reduce the odds:

- Learn how to recognize, avoid, or diffuse potentially violent situations by attending personal safety training programs.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security and report all incidents immediately in writing.
- Avoid traveling alone into unfamiliar locations or situations whenever possible.

RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE INCIDENTS:

You always should use the highest practical level of physical security in your workplace. However, there will always be the possibility for a violent incident to occur. If this happens, you should remember:

1. Contact local law enforcement (911) and follow their instructions
2. Get people away from the scene as quickly as possible
3. Secure the area, if possible, to reserve the scene for a later investigation
4. MOST importantly, STAY CALM.

CAN A VIOLENT SITUATION BE PREVENTED?

Yes, in fact **99%** of workplace violence perpetrators exhibit clear warning signs before "going postal." Some formulas to think about are:

P - O - S - T - A - L

Profile + **O**bservable Warning Signs + **S**hotgun + **T**riggering Event = **A**lways **L**ethal

But how can employees protect themselves and their coworkers when faced with a hostile, potentially violent **non**-employee:

D - O - G - S

Defusing **O**f **G**rievance = **S**afety

1. Understand the mindset of the hostile or potentially violent person - The person has a compelling need to communicate his grievance to someone now! Give him a verbal outlet. Even if he is wrong, the individual is acting on perceptions that are real to him.

2. Practice "Active Listening" - Stop what you are doing and give the person your full attention. Listen to what is really being said. Use silence and paraphrasing. Ask clarifying, open-ended questions.

3. Avoid confrontation. Instead, build trust and provide help - Be calm, courteous, respectful and patient; open and honest. Never belittle, embarrass or verbally attack a hostile person.

4. Allow a total airing of the grievance without comment or judgment - Make eye contact (but don't stare). Allow verbal venting of emotion. Let the person have his say (not necessarily his way). Ignore challenges and insults - don't take it personally; redirect attention to the real issue.

5. Allow the aggrieved party to suggest a solution - A person will more readily agree to a resolution that he helped formulate. And it might surprise you that the person's suggestion may be very reasonable.

6. Move toward a win-win resolution - Preserve the individual's dignity. Switch the focus from what you can't do toward what you can. With the person's permission, call in additional resources, e.g., supervisor, Human Resources, Employee Assistance Program, Security, or Police.

Safety Committee Members

- Vic White, Chairman
- Robin Benson, Vice Chair
- Brenda Rebo, Record Keeper
- Ken Boyd, Training Officer
- Roby Bowe
- Kelley Brown
- Amy Smart
- Sami Pierson
- Dennis Day
- Karmen McKinney
- Lisa Oedewaldt
- Terry Steiger
- Gregg Baney

Monthly Departmental Safety Meetings

Please remember, monthly departmental safety meetings must be documented and attendance rosters turned into Brenda Rebo. Attendance rosters should be turned in at the conclusion of each monthly safety meeting. The county will continue to conduct quarterly dinner gift certificate drawings for employees of departments who have 100% attendance at their monthly safety meetings. Employees attending all 12 departmental safety meetings shall be eligible for a safety incentive award at the end of the year.

UPCOMING TOPICS:

1. OFF THE JOB SAFETY

2. COLD WEATHER STRESS

**** LET ME KNOW IF THERE IS A
TOPIC YOU'D LIKE TO SEE ****

Lincoln County Safety Committee Mission Statement

To develop, put into practice, and maintain the Lincoln County Injury and Illness Prevention Program which promotes safety awareness and safe work practices for all county departments and employees and that is in compliance with all federal, state, and county requirements in order to reduce and prevent accidents, injuries, and illnesses of employees.

Safety
IS JOB ONE