



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 exits. 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 who, will do what, 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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