

Workplace Violence

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[Workplace Violence Guide \(Spanish\)](#)

Violence in the workplace is a real danger that can happen to anyone at any time. There are four main categories of workplace violence: violence by strangers, violence by customers, violence by co-workers, and domestic violence spillover.

Stranger Violence

Typically these are robbery situations. An individual enters the workplace with the intent to commit an act and leave. They have no relation to the company. If your company deals with large numbers of people and has cash on-hand, robbery prevention methods should be implemented. Employees should also be trained in what to do in the event of a robbery, how to describe a perpetrator, and should be advised to obtain counseling after a robbery occurs.

Customer/Client Violence

Violence from customers can come in the form of person-to-person contact involving physical or verbal abuse, abusive language over the telephone, hurtful or embarrassing faxes, and stalking. Company policy can assist in preventing more serious incidents of violence in the workplace arising from customer related issues. Training should teach employees how to react to an upset customer as well as when to terminate a phone call or visit with a customer in-person.

Prevention methods are also key to avoiding violence problems. Various security methods can be implemented to help prevent violent situations. Measures such as silent alarms, surveillance cameras, a secure entrance into the building, clear visibility and lighting can go a long way in deterring an attacker.

Co-Worker Violence

Disgruntled workers who seek revenge can cause violence in the workplace. Although this is the most notable form of this type of violence, co-worker disagreements, supervisor-to-employee arguments, sexual harassment and other violent acts fall into this category. Inappropriate jokes, cutting remarks, and rude behavior toward co-workers can cause anger and aggressive behavior.

Have employees report all incidents of violence, especially threats of violence, to help avoid larger incidents in the workplace. Warning signs of a potentially violent individual include, but are not limited to: isolates themselves, has few outside interests from work, blames others for disappointments, disobeys company procedures, is fascinated with weapons, has unusual behavior changes, has poor work performance, is confrontational with others, and possible drug abuse or home problems.

Domestic Violence Spillover

Domestic violence is one of the most rapidly growing forms of violence in the U.S. It is challenging to address this type of workplace violence because it deals with the personal life of an employee. It is important to remember that once a spouse, former spouse, or loved one enters company property, any violent situation they create becomes a company problem. If an employee is threatened by a family member or friend, management can distribute a photo of the individual so that other employees are aware of the situation and can take measures if that person comes into the workplace.

Employers should encourage employees to communicate when problems arise at home. Preventative steps cannot be taken if the company is unaware of a potentially violent situation. Escorts or security guards could be provided for the individual suffering domestic violence. If possible, the work shift could be altered to avoid a confrontation during the individual's regular work hours. All employees should be taught defusing techniques to deal with these situations.

The safety department at WCF Insurance teaches a seminar on violence in the workplace, giving employers the tools they need to implement a good violence prevention program. For dates and times, please consult safety seminar schedule at wcf.com/safety-registration.

Additional Resources

WCF Insurance Safety Department
(385) 351-8103

[Ask a Safety Consultant](#)

osha.gov

cdc.gov/niosh

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