

## Assaults / Violent Acts

Workplace violence is any threatening behavior, verbal abuse, or physical assault that takes place at your place of business. Factors placing workers at risk for violence in the workplace include interacting with the public, exchanging money, delivering services or goods, working late at night or during early morning hours, working alone, guarding valuable goods or property, and dealing with violent people or volatile situations. Workplace violence can be classified into four types of situations:

- **Criminal** – when the perpetrator has no legitimate relationship to the business or employees. This individual is usually committing a crime in conjunction with the violence. Employees may also be victimized outside of the usual workplace but while acting within the course and scope of their job employment.
- **Customer or Client** – when the perpetrator has a legitimate relationship with the business and becomes violent while receiving services from the business. Violence of this sort can be subdivided into two different types. One involves the individuals that could be inherently violent (prison inmates, mental health service recipients, etc.). The other would include individuals that are violent in certain situations. These situations would typically be those that provoke or frustrate the individual.
- **Co-worker** – when the perpetrator is an employee, former employee, prospective employee, or contractor who is temporarily employed by the business and who attacks or threatens another employee. This can also be subcategorized to violence between supervisors and subordinates, and/or between workers at the same level; and
- **Domestic violence** – when the perpetrator, who has no legitimate relationship to the business, but has a relationship with the intended victim, threatens, harass, or assaults (resulting in injury or death) the intended victim at the workplace.

Assaults and violent acts accounted for approximately 15% of fatal occupational injury in the United States in 2007. Yet, workplace homicides have declined 40% since 1994.

Prevention takes place through awareness and preparedness. To be successful, efforts must have commitment from top management and must involve the supervisors, employees, and employee representatives.

- Strict policies should be implemented that address confidential employee information, deny or restrict workplace access of relatives or outside visitors, and allow flexibility in the use of leave, work schedules or transfers in situations where an employee may be at risk.
- Perform a workplace security analysis to determine the presence of hazards, conditions, operations, and situations that could place employees at risk.
- Send out a workplace survey to employees to identify the potential for violent incidents and to confirm the need for improved security measures. Encourage employees to participate.
- Form a Threat Assessment Team to identify and institute control methods that will eliminate or minimize the risk of incidents. These controls may include:
  - General building, work station and area design, and security measures
    - Ensure facilities are designed for the privacy of patients, clients, and customers but still allow employees to communicate with co-workers in an emergency situation.
    - Design areas and arrange furniture to prevent entrapment during an assault incident.
    - Use methods to control access to employee work areas.
    - Provide adequate lighting in parking areas and around the facility.
  - Security equipment
    - Use alarms, Closed Circuit Television, Metal Detection systems
    - Regularly inspect equipment to ensure it is in proper working condition and its effectiveness.
  - Work practice controls and procedures
    - Develop policies and implement security procedures
    - Provide ID badges to all employees
    - Modify existing work practices