Workplace Violence
What You Need to Know to Protect Yourself and Your Employees
While the motivation and circumstances of each incident of workplace violence varies, the end result is the same: injury, death, chaos, frightened employees, and damages to trust and the perception of safety. Every workplace is vulnerable. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly two million American workers become workplace violence victims each year.\(^1\)

Every day in the United States, violence accounts for one in six workplace fatalities.\(^1\)

While some workplace tragedies become the focus of local and even national headlines, there are thousands of incidents that go unreported by the media, but still have an enormous impact. Not only do these incidents directly impact the victims and their families, but there is a significant burden placed on co-workers and ultimately the businesses where they occur.
Employees who witness workplace violence warning signs should immediately report them to their supervisor.

If the threat is imminent, contact local law enforcement.

To better understand workplace violence and deal with its ramifications, it’s best to understand what defines it.

What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is defined as a wide range of acts that include all violent behaviors and threats of violence, as well as any conduct that can result in injury, property damage, induce a sense of fear or otherwise impede the normal course of work.

Is Your Organization Prepared?

Despite the increasing number of high profile workplace violence incidents and the fact that workplace violence is the second leading cause of workplace deaths in the U.S., many companies have yet to develop a formalized plan to address this problem. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 70 percent of workplaces do not have a formal program or policy to address workplace violence.

Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Incidents of workplace violence rarely occur without warning. In many cases, there are signs, comments or emotional and physical behavior that may lead up to a volatile situation. These warning signs can include:

» Intimidating, harassing, bullying or other inappropriate or aggressive behavior.
» Numerous conflicts with coworkers, supervisors or customers.
» Bringing a weapon to the workplace, making inappropriate references to guns, or a fascination with weapons.
» Direct or veiled threats of harm.
» Substance abuse.
» Extreme changes in normal behaviors.
» Fixating on incidents of workplace violence, or identifying with perpetrators of workplace homicides.
» Displaying desperation (over family, financial and other personal problems) to the point of contemplating suicide.
» Making sudden changes to work schedules.
» Suddenly requiring more supervision than in the past.

CAUSES OF WORKPLACE DEATHS:

#1 Transportation Accidents
#2 Workplace Violence
#3-T Equipment Accidents
#3-T Slips, Trips and Falls
Workplace Violence

Types of Workplace Violence

The U.S. Department of Justice has classified workplace violence into four specific types:

1. **Criminal Intent**
   These are violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace, but enter the premises to commit robbery or another crime. This type accounts for the vast majority, nearly 80 percent, of workplace homicides.

2. **Customer/Client**
   Violence is directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students or any others for whom an organization provides services.

3. **Worker-on-Worker**
   Violence is committed against co-workers, supervisors or managers by a present or former employee.

4. **Domestic Violence**
   Violence that is committed in the workplace by someone who doesn’t work there, but has or had a personal relationship with an employee, such as an abusive spouse or domestic partner.

It’s important to note that both Worker-on-Worker and Domestic Violence types are much more likely to present warning signs. Employees that witness unusual behavior should immediately report it to their supervisor. It is important to never underestimate the potential for a co-worker to act out violently. Being proactive can only help the situation and ultimately prevent it from occurring.

What to Do in a Workplace Violence Situation

Despite warning signs and programs that may already be in place, workplace violence may still occur. What should employees do in a harmful and potentially fatal situation?

- **Call 911.**
- **If there is a safe exit, take it.**
  - If not, hide, lock doors, turn out lights and conceal your location.

Violence accounts for 1 out of every 6 fatal workplace injuries. There are approximately 16,400 workplace threats every day – of those, fewer than 700 employees become victims of homicide.
What to Do if You’re Confronted by an Armed Individual

» If possible and without placing yourself or others in harm’s way, try to defuse the person’s anger so that they can cool down and talk calmly and rationally.

» Maintain composure. Trying to help someone calm down cannot be achieved if you become emotional.

» Try to signal for help from a co-worker who can contact management, security, the police or other first responders.

» Listen attentively. Hostile individuals who feel like they have someone’s attention are sometimes less likely to act out physically.

» Assume an open stance, placing the majority of your weight on your back foot. This looks non-confrontational and will give you more freedom to react should you be attacked.

» Know what to do with your hands. It is better to show your palms to the attacker rather than crossing your arms or making a fist. Open palms show you are unarmed.

» Maintain eye contact to help calm the person and keep their attention.

» Be courteous and patient until help arrives.

» If the person is threatening with a weapon follow their instructions and stall for time.

» Never try to intercept the weapon or act aggressively against the individual. This will escalate the situation and cause potential injury to those directly involved, as well as bystanders.

70% of workplaces do not have either a formal program or policy to address workplace violence problems.
Training
Once the plan is established, employee-wide training should be conducted as soon as possible. However, this should not be a one-time event. Training should include:

» Practice drills.
» Critiques and evaluation.
» Policy and procedure review and evaluation.
» Ongoing re-training.

Workplace violence prevention training should become a routine activity. As an organization evolves, so should the plan and the training.
Open Communication
During any crisis situation, maintaining open lines of communication is critical. However, laying the groundwork for open communication begins long before any incident actually takes place.

Proactive preparedness is essential as workplace violence can happen in any industry, at any time. A comprehensive plan that is regularly reviewed and practiced and ongoing attention to this important issue, will help raise awareness and better equip you to respond.

Internal Communication
As part of the training program and as part of other employee communications, it is important to inform and educate employees on the workplace violence prevention policy.

Develop a system that allows for employees to safely report potential workplace violence issues. This can include providing employees with forms, a hotline or other tools that encourage them to report and log all incidents and threats of workplace violence. Listening to these reports and proactively addressing them will help to alleviate smaller issues before they turn violent.

External Communication
Once a plan is developed and ready to be enacted, share the plan with local law enforcement and first responders. Provide them with a copy of the plan and inform them of any major changes to the plan.

If an incident has the potential to escalate, provide law enforcement with details so they can be alerted to a potential incident.

72% of CEOs say their organizations offer counseling to their employees, but only 48% of those organizations’ employees said they knew about the services.

Workplace Violence | 6
The information in this reference guide was compiled from the following sources:

2. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Volume 80; Issue 1, January 2011
6. IOMA 2011 Report of Workplace Violence
7. Workplace Violence: Issues in Response, p. 20; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation
8. National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health
9. The Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (CAEPV)

Sources

**About AlliedBarton**

AlliedBarton Security Services is the industry’s premier provider of highly trained security personnel. Responsive, client-focused security officers and managers located across the country are supported by national resources developed from over 50 years of security experience.

The most honored security officer services company, AlliedBarton offers on-the-job, web-based, and ongoing training programs for all personnel from security officers through executive-level management. Our commitment to training includes customized industry-specific programs.

AlliedBarton’s focus on leadership and Human Capital Management moves employee growth and development to the forefront of company initiatives and fosters a culture of quality and continuous customer satisfaction.

AlliedBarton security officers adhere to quality standards designed to provide unparalleled service and are proactive, responsive and ready to meet your needs.