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Violence: Prevention & Survival

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Violence in Your Workplace: Prevention & Survival



In the United States, more than seven people per hour die a violent death.

More than 19,100 people were victims of homicide in 2019.
(47,500 died by suicide)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



US Records Highest Increase in Nation's Homicide Rate in Modern History

Oct 6, 2021

The United States has just recorded its highest increase in rates of homicide in modern history, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Provisional data from the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, released early Wednesday, suggest the homicide rate for the United States rose 30% between 2019 and 2020. It is the highest increase recorded in modern history -- and confirms through public health data a rise in homicides that so far had been identified only through crime statistics.

The previous largest increase in the US homicide rate was a 20% rise recorded from 2000 to 2001 because of the September 11 terror attacks, according to NCHS.

"It is the largest increase in 100 years," Robert Anderson, chief of the mortality statistics branch at NCHS, said.



Violent crimes remained higher the first half of 2023 compared to the first half of 2019.

While homicide has receded from its peak in 2021, levels remained 24% higher than in the first half of 2019.

Even if homicide rates were to fall back to pre-pandemic levels, the 2019 homicide rate was still 15% higher than in 2014.

Council on Criminal Justice



Pain in the Nation 2022: U.S. Experienced Highest Ever Combined Rates of Deaths Due to Alcohol, Drugs, and Suicide During the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic

May 24, 2022

Deaths associated with alcohol, drugs, and suicide took the lives of 186,763 Americans in 2020, a 20 percent one year increase in the combined death rate and the highest number of substance misuse deaths ever recorded for a single year.

While alcohol, drug, and suicide deaths have been increasing for decades, the 2020 increase was unprecedented and driven by a 30 percent increase in the rate of drug-induced deaths and a 27 percent increase in the rate of alcohol-induced deaths. Combined rates of alcohol, drug, and suicide deaths increased in all 50 states except New Hampshire, and for the first time two states – West Virginia and New Mexico – surpassed 100 deaths per 100,000 state residents from alcohol, drugs, and suicide combined in a single year.



There are more than 2 million reported acts of violence per year in America's workplaces.

These acts cost companies approximately \$121 billion a year ...and these are only the incidents that are reported.



Costs to organizations & employees

- Security
- Building repair and cleanup
- Business interruptions with customers
- Loss of productivity
- Lost work time
- Turnover of employees
- Salary continuation for those who are injured or traumatized
- Valued employees quitting or retiring early
- Increase in workers' compensation claims
- Increase in medical claims
- Increase in insurance premium rates
- Costs of attorney fees, medical care, and psychological care for current employees



What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting.

A workplace may be any location either permanent or temporary where an employee performs any work-related duty.



Workplace violence history

As old as relationship between employer and employee

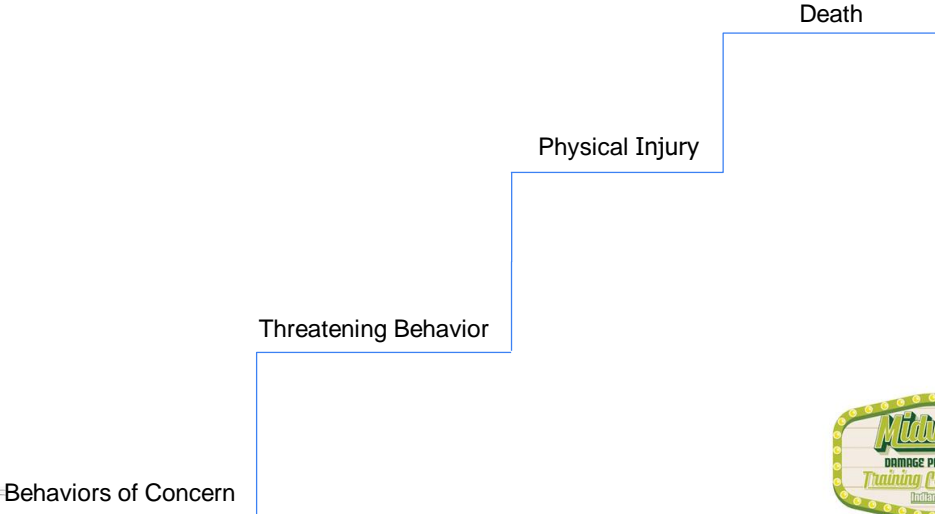


Forms of workplace violence

- Beatings
- Stabbings
- Suicides
- Shootings
- Rapes
- Threats or obscene phone calls
- Intimidation
- Harassment of any nature
- Being followed, sworn or shouted at
- Psychological trauma



Workplace violence spectrum



Observable warning signs

- Violent and threatening behavior – hostility
- “Strange” behavior – becoming reclusive, deteriorating appearance
- Emotional problems – drug/alcohol abuse, under unusual stress, depression
- Performance problems – including problems with attendance or tardiness
- Interpersonal problems – conflicts, hyper-sensitivity
- “At the end of his rope” – indicators of impending suicide, has an unspecified plan to “solve all problems”



Triggering event



This is what triggers a crisis for an individual. When people go into that type of mode, it affects the way they think, it affects the way they feel, and lastly, and what we need to be sensitive to, it affects the way they behave.

On the other hand, it might be a series of imagined slights to someone who is overreacting and blowing a situation out of proportion. Those who blame others for everything, people who have a short fuse, or are very intolerant to frustration, can be suspicious of others.

There are individuals that experts term “**injustice collectors.**” They perceive every slight as something that they should take action upon. They’re constantly hypersensitive to criticism. No matter how much time has passed, the “injustice collector” will not forget or forgive those wrongs or the people he believes are responsible.



Triggering event

- Being fired, laid off or suspended, passed over for promotion
- Disciplinary action, poor performance review, criticism from boss or coworkers
- Bank or court action (foreclosure, restraining order, custody hearing)
- Benchmark date (company anniversary, chronological age; Hitler's birthday was the case at Columbine)
- Failed or spurned romance; personal crisis (divorce, death in family)



Types of workplace violence

Type 1 – Criminal

The perpetrator has no legitimate relationship with the employer or workplace, other than to enter and commit a crime such as robbery.

Type 2 – Customer/client

A customer or client of the business directs violence at employees, possibly because of dissatisfaction with service or product.

Type 3 – Employee on employee

An employee or former employee perpetrates violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers.

Type 4 – Domestic

Violence is committed in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there but has a personal relationship with an employee – an abusive spouse or domestic partner.



OSHA General Duty Clause

SEC. 5. Duties

(a) Each employer

(1) shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees;

(2) shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act.

(b) Each employee shall comply with occupational safety and health standards and all rules, regulations, and orders issued pursuant to this Act which are applicable to his own actions and conduct.



Violence is more likely to occur in workplaces:

- without policies
- without an employee screening process
- without a proper training program
- with managers who ignore behaviors of concern
- with managers who terminate employees without due cause



Violence is more likely to occur in workplaces that:

- tolerate a toxic work environment
- fail to enforce sexual harassment policies or disciplinary procedures
- ignore employees' complaints about a fellow employee
- subject employees to frequent change and uncertainty
- have inadequate security measures and procedures
- fail to treat people with dignity, respect, kindness, and compassion



Assess for risk

Identify

Eliminate

Reduce/avoid

Assume/deal with



Warning signs

- Sudden and persistent complaining about unfair treatment
- Blaming of others for personal problems
- Behavior changes – mood swings, depression
- Deterioration in job performance
- Wishing harm on supervisors or other employees
- Paranoid behavior
- Sudden increased absenteeism
- Increased demand of supervisor's time
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Talking to oneself
- Obsession with weapons, flashing a weapon



Warning signs

- Instability in family relationships
- Financial problems combined with not receiving a raise or promotion
- Poor relationships with co-workers or management
- History of violent behavior
- Previous threats – direct or indirect
- Obsession with and bizarre comments about violent events
- Quiet seething, sullenness
- Refusal to accept criticism about job performance
- Sudden mood swings, depression
- Sudden refusal to comply with rules or refusal to perform duties
- Inability to control feelings, outbursts or rage



Conflict & De-escalation

The message the receiver gets is the **ONLY** one that counts in a conflict situation.



Angry person

- Remain calm.
- Allow the person to vent.
- Show empathy.
- Identify needs and wants.
- Seek a solution or alternatives.
- Follow through on commitment.





Compose yourself

Stay calm and try to avoid getting tense. Take a breath and relax your facial muscles. Breathing deeply and evenly will help keep you calm.



Voice control

Use a low monotone voice. Avoid allowing your voice to escalate to a high-pitch. Be attentive and confident.



Don't take it personally

Do not be defensive. Angry customers will often direct anger at you, rather than your company. To them, you represent the company. If you get drawn into the conflict emotionally, it will only escalate.



Don't argue or yell

Don't try to argue or convince someone who is angry. Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath; then talk. Speak calmly at an average volume.





Listen to understand

Everyone wants to be heard. Learn to listen and really understand what someone means and how it makes them feel. Identify the underlying feeling and acknowledge it.

Reflective listening involves a cycle of listening to what someone says, understanding what they need, and then reflecting it back to them to seek confirmation that you understood correctly.



Know when to ask for help

Be aware of any resources available for back up.



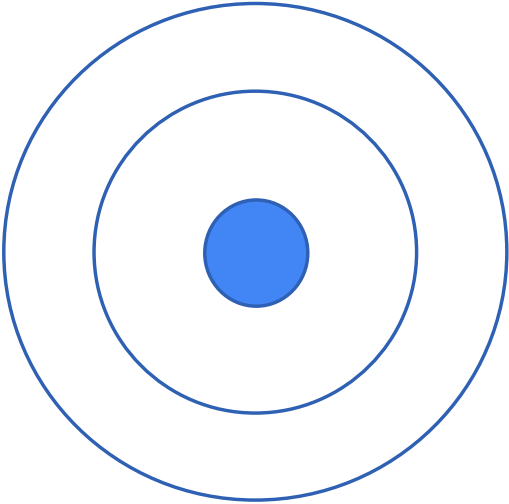


Physical stance

Never turn your back for any reason.
Allow extra physical space between you – about 4 times your usual distance.



Reactionary gap



Trust your instincts

Trust your instincts. If you assess or feel that de-escalation is not working, STOP! You will know within 2 or 3 minutes if it's beginning to work. Call for help or call the police.



Preplanning

Shorten your reaction time

Help overcome tendency to *freeze*



“We evaluate people all the time, quite attentively, but they only get our conscious attention when there is a reason. We see it all, but we edit out most of it. Thus, when something does call out to us, we ought to pay attention. For many people, that is a muscle they don’t exercise.”

- Gavin de Becker



Intuition is a person’s sense about a situation influenced by experience and knowledge.

Intuition is the way the mind picks up on patterns and uses experiential and learned knowledge to guide a person during a given situation.

* Left of Bang by Patrick Van Horne



Factors that affect perception

- Stress
- Lack of sleep
- Personal life
- Pressure
- Work overload
- Deadlines
- Depression
- Illness
- Being in a hurry
- Familiarity
- Complacency



Signs of mounting aggression

- Rapid breathing
- Shaky vocal patterns
- Loud speech/shouting
- Swearing/verbal abuse
- Threatening speech
- Target acquisition/scanning
- Darting eyes
- Intense glare
- Sweating
- Clenched teeth and jaw
- Aggressive posture
- Stamping feet
- Flaring nostrils
- Restless/fidgeting
- Flushed face or extreme paleness
- Standing too close



3 Ds

- **Denial** – We tend to display a surprisingly creative and willful brand of denial. This denial can take the form of delay.
- **Deliberation** – We know something is terribly wrong, but we don't know what to do about it.
- **Decisive moment** – We've accepted that we are in danger; we've deliberated our options. Now, we take action.

* *The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes-and Why*, by Amanda Ripley



Prepare

Know warning signs of violence

Make sure employees know procedures for violent situations

Mentally prepare for "what if" situations

Take all threats seriously



Before we are in that situation, we must have a mental plan of what we will do if violence occurs.

What options do we have?

What escape routes are available?

What can we use for our defense?



Active shooter plan

“An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area.”



According to the FBI...

Unpredictable and evolve quickly.

Most active shooter events are over in 5 mins or less.

35% are over in less than 2 mins.



“Time is our worst adversary in dealing with active killers.

We’re racing what I call ‘the stopwatch of death.’

Victims are often added to the toll every several seconds.”

- Ron Borsch, manager and trainer at the SEALE Regional Training Academy in Bedford, Ohio



Key components of a workplace violence plan

Policy – thorough, written policy that indicates no violent behavior, intimidation, threats will be tolerated. Violent incidents will lead to discipline and/or termination.

Response procedures – employees should know how to respond to a perceived or actual threat of violence, including who to report concerns to. They must also know an investigation will take place.

Assessment – locate and identify potential problems areas and weaknesses.

Training and education –communicate policies and procedures to managers, supervisors, and employees. Conduct training sessions and educate the workforce on how to recognize and respond to violent situations.

Post-incident response – develop procedures for addressing the aftermath and trauma of a workplace violence incident.



Finally...

- Assess
- Plan
- Communicate
- Train
- Reassess





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