

10 things employers should know or do related to the threat of workplace violence



Ryan Neumeyer, Karina R. Conley | Monday, March 11, 2019

Employers, now, more than ever, must be prepared to deal with and prevent workplace violence. Below are 10 things employers should know or do related to the threat of workplace violence. Also save the date for **Monday, May 6**, for a Business Hour on workplace violence featuring informative and practical insight from McDonald Hopkins' Ryan Neumeyer and Mike McMasters, a Protective Security Advisor for the Department of Homeland Security. The presentation - live in Cleveland or available via webcast - will include information on legal issues related to workplace violence, how to evaluate potential risk factors in the workplace, policies to deal with workplace violence, physical security of facilities, and how to plan for and prevent active shooter situations.

1. Incidents of workplace violence can be divided into four categories:
 1. An offense by a stranger to the employer or its employees.
 2. An offense by a customer or client of the employer.
 3. An offense by an employee or former employee of the employer.
 4. An offense by an individual who has a personal relationship with an employee who is the intended victim.
2. Statistics demonstrate that violence is the second leading cause of death in the workplace and the first among women. Most homicides in the workplace are committed during robberies. Shootings

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accounted for 394 of the 500 workplace homicides in 2016 (the most recent year for which there is data). Of the workplace homicides in 2016, 409 (82 percent) were homicides of men and 91 (18 percent) were homicides of women. However, homicides represented 24 percent of fatal occupational injuries to women in 2016 compared with 9 percent of fatal occupational injuries to men.

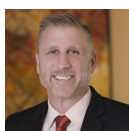
3. Risk assessments are vital to determine what type of threats are likely and the potential consequences of such incidents. Risk factors include working alone or in small numbers, working late and early morning, working with money, delivering passengers or goods, having a mobile workplace, and working in high crime areas, guarding property, and contact with the public.
4. Prevention strategies include:
 - Not requiring workers to work late at night or early in the morning
 - Providing security for employees who must work late where possible
 - Training employees to carry a phone but not bury their head in the phone
 - Evaluating access to the physical layout of a facility to eliminate blind spots and other unnecessary hazards
 - Placing curved mirrors in hallways
 - Maintaining good lighting
 - Preparing a plan for workplace violence
 - Controlling access to buildings
 - Video surveillance to protect people and not just property
 - Training employees to anticipate and respond to violent incidents
 - Creating access points to the building
 - Installing locks on doors, windows, interior locks, and gates
 - Controlling the egress and ingress of visitors and employees
 - Posting evacuation and route maps, safe shelter locations
 - Providing kits for first responders with needed keys, passwords, a map of the facility, a sharpie to mark victims, first aid materials, etc.
 - Identifying and communicating the location of the bad actor if possible
5. Train employees regarding warning signs of confusion, frustration, blame, anger, and hostility.
6. Train employees regarding teamwork and communication. For example, employees should be instructed to disengage a person who is angry and bring a third person into the discussion, draw the person back to the facts, listen to the person, do not argue, show respect and concern, and focus on areas of agreement.
7. Train employees on when they need to alert supervisors and security personal in relation to others' behavior or language (i.e., physical actions or threats appear imminent, immediate danger of physical harm or property damage by a co-worker or outsider, out of control behavior).
8. Create an Emergency Action Plan that includes training for how to respond to various incidents, such as an active shooter or workplace violence. An Emergency Action Plan should include instruction such as how to isolate a secure working area (run-hide-fight); examples of when to call 911 and what

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information to share (about the situation, about the threat, and about yourself and the victims); how to seek medical attention for victims; when to report incidents to a supervisor; how to assist individuals with disabilities during an incident; and how to file a written report.

9. Do active shooter drills and designate a responder liaison with knowledge of the facility and floor plan. Active shooter drills may include consulting with law enforcement for clear instructions on what to do during an incident and then conducting role playing drills with employees. Teach individuals the run-hide-fight concept and what some options are in active shooter situations – establish evacuation routes, identify places to hide, and identify in what situations it would be necessary to fight. Coordinate drills with law enforcement and request their participation.
10. Develop a security alert system that uses email, text, auditory and other systems to alert individuals that there is an active shooter situation at the workplace.

Unfortunately, being prepared for an active shooter situation and other incidents of workplace violence is now a necessity. Should a company have interest in receiving assistance in developing an emergency response plan, an active shooter response policy, or related training, please feel free to contact one of the attorneys listed below.



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