

Violence in the Workplace

Impact, Types, Causes, & Prevention

Ohio Division of Safety & Hygiene



“We want to believe that human violence is somehow beyond our understanding, because as long as it remains a mystery, we have no duty to avoid it, explore it, or anticipate it.”

The Gift of Fear by Gavin de Becker



“. . . the path toward violence is an evolutionary one, with signposts along the way.”

The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective by Mary Ellen O’Toole, PhD

Let's take a look at the numbers

- Each year 110,000 acts of violence occur on the job.
- Almost 20% of workplace violence occurs in the Midwest.
- The most common targets are women, employees over 60 and managers.

(Source: BLS and NIOSH).





Workplace Deaths

- Homicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in the workplace
- Worker on worker violence resulting in death only represents 4%; The remainder is from robberies, assaults from customers, patients, etc.

Awareness Impact



- The number of workplace homicides fell 9% to 516 in 2006 reflecting a decrease of more than 50% from the all time high in 1994.
- An American Society of Industrial Security survey indicates the top 3 prevention strategies to be: employee training, zero tolerance and controlled access to buildings.

OSHA'S 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;



Definitions

- Harassment

- The act of someone creating a hostile work environment through unwelcome words, actions or physical contact or stalking behavior NOT resulting in physical harm.

- Threat

- An expression of an intent to cause physical harm at that time or in the future. Any words, slurs, gestures, stalking behavior or display of weapons which are perceived by the worker as a clear and real threat to their safety and which may cause fear, anxiety or the inability to perform job functions.



Definitions

- **Physical Attack:**

With or without the use of a weapon, a physical attack is any aggressive act of kicking, pushing, biting, scratching, sexual attack or any other such physical act directed to the worker by a co-worker, patient, client, relative or associated individual which arises during or as a result of the performance of duties and which results in death or physical injury.



Examples

- Verbal threats to inflict bodily harm
- Attempting to cause physical harm; striking, pushing or other aggressive acts
- Disorderly conduct such as shouting, throwing or pushing objects, punching walls, and slamming doors.



Examples

- Verbal harassment; abusive or offensive language; gestures or other discourteous conduct
- Making false, malicious, or unfounded statements against coworkers to damage their reputation or undermine their authority
- Fascination with guns or other weapons; bringing weapons to the workplace



VIWP Types: So what?

- counters “randomness” argument
- breaks down the problem
 - different causes
 - different solutions needed





Type 1: By a Stranger





Warning Signs - Type 1

- Increased crime in the area
- Incidents in similar industry or workplace
- Employee concerns
- Special or unique conditions: time of year, local events
- Poor or no security
- Poor environmental design

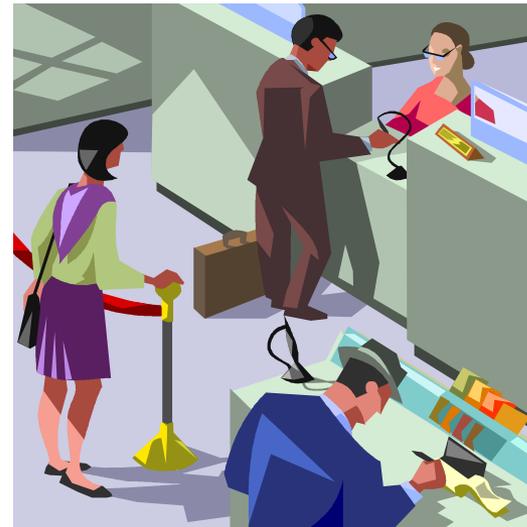


Please do not leave this door open unless you are loading or unloading in this area. When you are finished, please make sure this door is closed.

EMERGENCY EXIT

PLEASE ASSEMBLE IN THE FRONT
PARKING LOT AWAY FROM THE
BUILDING

Types II: By a Customer or Client:



Warning Signs - Type 2

- Increased number of complaints from a client, etc.
- Increased number of complaints with one product or service
- Security breaches
- “Close call”
- Employee concerns



Type III: Internal to Company



Warning Signs - Type 3



- Has a history of interpersonal conflict, is argumentative or uncooperative
- Has difficulty accepting authority or criticism
- Tends to blame others for problems
- Decreased social connection with little or no family support
- Significant changes in behavior, performance, or appearance



Type IV: By Personal Relations



Warning Signs - Type 4

- distraught employee
- evidence or claims of harassment
- suspicious person on property



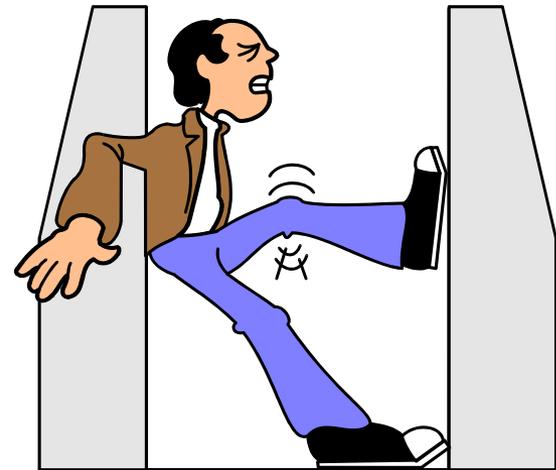




Causes

Psychological & Social

- Personal expectations
- Culture change
- Domestic spill-over
- Reduced trust
- Reduced caring
- Less control
- Media influence



Jobs-Economy

- Downsizing
- “Jobs” vs. “Careers”
- Personal identity from job
- Labor-management tension
- Negligent hiring & retention



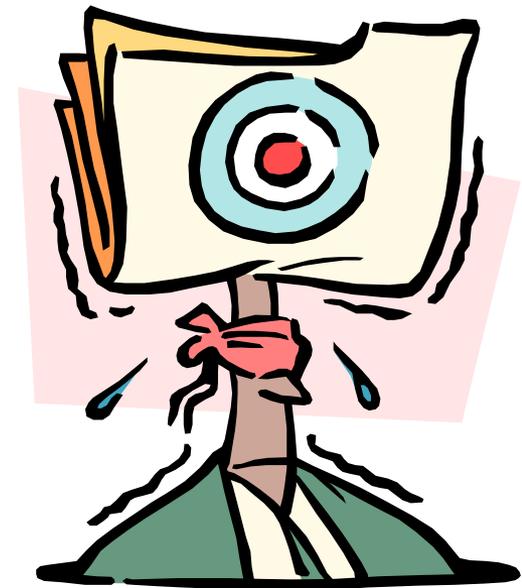
Denial

- VIWP is not a big problem.
- Even if it is, it's not a problem here.
- I can't do anything about it anyway.
- It's a social, not a workplace, problem.



Stress

- Fear of losing job
- Other major life-changing event
- Substance abuse
- Personal problems
- Feelings of oppression



Leadership Style

- Autocratic management / supervisory style
- Managers out of touch with workers
- Organizational change
- Unrealistic expectations
- Unfair allocation of tasks





Prevention



Management Commitment & Leadership Style

- Recognize potential problem
- Use labor-management partnership
- Be a communicator, facilitator, expeditor
- Implement a VIWP policy



Employee Involvement

- Participation and support in determining policies
- Assist with risk assessment
- Recognize signs of stress in co-workers
- Communication throughout the organization
- Input on training needs



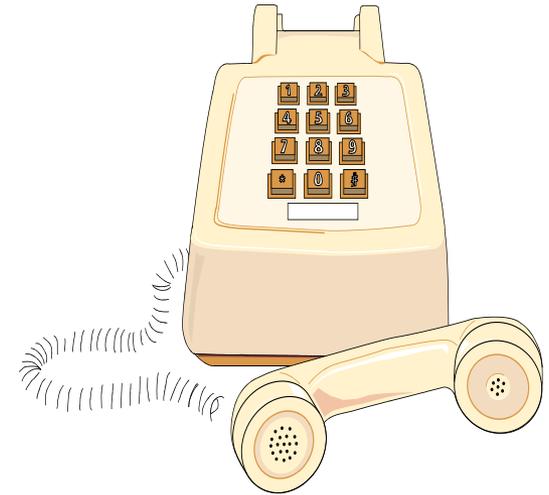
Zero Tolerance Policy

- Ensure that the consequences reflect the action
- Elements (purpose, definitions, reporting procedure, investigation, disciplinary action)
- Non-retaliation
- Clear expectations
- Forms
- Organizational “buy-in”



Pre-hiring Checks

- Criminal background check
- Driving record (if applicable)
- Check references carefully
 - employers, supervisors, coworkers
- Ask open-ended questions during the interview
- Verify credentials
- Test for drug use-BWC'S DFSP



Risk Assessment

- Workplace security analysis
- Customer flow / Hours of operation
- Treatment of customers / clients
- Training of personnel
- Restricted areas
- Installation of panic-buttons/warning devices



**STAFF
ONLY**



Crisis Contacts/Emergency Procedures

- Who to contact?
- When to sound alarm?
- Lockdown procedures.
- Who speaks to police/media?



Documentation

- Purpose of documentation (to determine severity, to evaluate control methods, to identify training needs)
- Injuries, incident reports
- Risk assessment results
- Corrective actions
- Follow up actions
- Training



Summary

- Actively address VIWP issues
- Assess the risk of violence
- Involve employees
- Document incidents & take threats seriously
- Implement a VIWP policy
- Consistently apply policy
- Train all employees

