

Workplace Safety

10 Things Employers Need to Know or Do

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In years past, workplace violence was thought of in relation to employees having verbal altercations and sometimes even physical disagreements. However, times have changed and the reality is that now employers must prepare themselves not only for incidents such as robberies or physical assaults, but also aggravated assaults and mass shootings. The following are 10 things employers should know or do related to the threat of workplace violence:

1 Incidents of workplace violence can be divided into four categories: An offense by a stranger to the employer or its employees. An offense by a customer or client. An offense by an employee or former employee. 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 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 the types of threats likely and the potential consequences of such incidents. Risk factors include working alone or in small numbers, working late/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 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 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. 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, show respect and concern, and focus on areas of agreement. Do not argue.

7 Train employees on when they need to alert supervisors and security personnel in relation to others' behavior or language (i.e., physical actions or threats appear imminent, immediate danger of harm or 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 information to share; 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 on what to do during an incident and then conducting drills with employees. Teach individuals the run-hide-fight concept and what 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.

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. Use clear, concise and common language while communicating.

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 at McDonald Hopkins <https://mcdonaldhopkins.com/>.

Also visit <https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/> for more detailed guidelines on planning/training/preparing for an active intruder incident.