

The Workplace

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A Fact Sheet

Highlights

The four main types of workplace violence are:

1. Criminal Intent—person usually committing a crime in conjunction with the violence
2. Customers/Clients—violent person has legitimate relationship with company
3. Worker-on-Worker—violent person is either a present or former employee
4. Personal Relations—violent person has or previously has had a personal relationship with one of the workers

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Understanding Workplace Violence: The Types

Workplace violence is the leading cause of death among female workers and the second leading cause of death among males in the workplace. Before the types of acts considered to be workplace violence can be fully understood, it is important to examine the definition of workplace violence. The purpose, therefore, of this issue of *The Workplace* is two-fold:

1) To look at the broad definition of workplace violence, and 2) To provide a list of the four types of workplace violence, an explanation of each type, and the more common corresponding risk factors.

Workplace violence, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, can be any act of

physical violence, threats of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening, disruptive behavior that occurs at the place of work. This broad definition encompasses more than physical assaults. According to the Workplace Violence Research Institute, workplace violence is any act against an employee that creates a hostile work environment and negatively affects the employee, either physically or psychologically. On any given day, more than 16,000 threats are made in the workplace, approximately 700 more are actually attacked, and almost 44,000 are harassed in some way. Verbal assaults, intimidation and threats, and acts of coercion as well as all types of harassment may be considered acts of vio-



The behavior of some employees are like ticking time-bombs; if not defused, these individuals can become violent. Recognizing and reducing potential risks are important to the security of the workplace.

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lence. Understanding the types of behavior that can, although not usually, lead to more violent acts is the first step in providing a safe work environment.

Most acts of violence committed in the workplace fall into one of four basic types. The following table presents an explanation along with common risk factors associated with each.

“On any given day, more than 16,000 threats are made in the workplace . . .”

Type	Definition	Risk Factors
Criminal Intent	Person exhibiting violent behavior has no legitimate relationship to the business or its employees; person is usually committing a crime in conjunction with the violence, such as robbery. Accounts for approximately 85% of workplace homicides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working alone • Handling money • Working the night shift • Too little lighting inside and/or outside • Limited view of worksite from outside • High crime area
Customers/Clients	Person exhibiting violent behavior has a legitimate relationship and becomes violent while being served. Potential persons could include customers, clients, patients, students or any group for which business provides service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working alone • Working when few others are present, such as nights • Easy accessibility of the worksite • Working with customers who have violent pasts • Lack of fast communication device • No escape route
Worker-on-Worker	Person exhibiting violent behavior is either a present or former employee. Person either threatens or attacks another employee or former employee. Accounts for approximately 7% of workplace homicides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating stress in the workplace • No management protocol for disciplinary, termination, promotion action • Lack of adequately screening prior to hiring (i.e. individual with a history of violent behavior in workplace) • Inadequately trained supervisors
Personal Relations	Person exhibiting violent behavior usually has or previously has had a personal relationship with one of the workers. This type of includes incidents of domestic violence that overflows into the work setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy accessibility of the worksite • Person has violent pasts • Working alone or where few others are present, such as nights • Lack of administrative policy regarding workers with problems • Unavailability of fast communication device • No escape route

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