

Topic: Workplace Violence

How to Protect Yourself against Workplace Violence

Question: Which of the following is an instance of workplace violence?

- A customer throwing an object at an employee
- Snide, intimidating remarks whispered by one co-worker to another
- Insults posted by a client on an employee's Facebook page
- One co-worker striking another

Answer: They're all forms of workplace violence.

Workplace violence can happen anywhere, any time and it can come from a co-worker or a stranger. It can include physical assault or be a form of threatening or disruptive behavior, such as a raised fist or condescending language.

Every year, millions of workers in North America report having been victims of workplace violence. And it's likely that many more cases go unreported.

How You Can Reduce Your Risks

You have the right to a safe workplace. There are several ways that your employer can reduce the risks of violence, such as by positioning furniture and workstations so that employees cannot be cornered, by controlling access to certain areas of a building, and by implementing a written policy about workplace violence, harassment and other unacceptable behavior.

There are also some ways you can reduce the risks, too. Here are just a few:

- Carry a personal alarm or a cell phone to notify authorities if trouble arises, particularly if you work alone or away from a traditional workplace setting.
- If you work off-site, establish a call-in schedule with a designated contact who knows your location and schedule.
- Check the credentials of clients you meet off-site.
- Keep business doors locked before business officially opens and immediately after closing.
- Report all instances of bullying, harassment or threats of any nature.
- Report all suspicious persons and vehicles seen around your jobsite
- Do not give out information about yourself or your co-workers.
- Be particularly vigilant when work-related factors increase the risk of violence, such as working late hours of the night or working in areas where alcohol is served.
- Listen to your instincts and leave any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe.
- When outside, walk only in well-lighted, busy areas.

If you find yourself with a potentially violent person:

TOOLBOX TALKS



- Stay calm and try to avoid antagonizing the aggressor. Listen to the person, keep your voice level and calm when you speak, and do not argue. Try to offer a solution that gives the person a way out.
- Do not put your own safety at risk and keep a safe distance from the person. Ask a co-worker for help.
- Report the incident immediately and write down as much as you can remember. After that, keep a record of your phone calls, messages and other communications.

Conclusion

You can't always tell if someone has the potential for violence, but there are some warning signs to watch for. If a co-worker or customer frequently complains about unfair treatment, overreacts to criticism, and makes inappropriate comments about revenge or violence, report the behavior to your supervisor right away and avoid conflicts with this person.

Questions:

1. Workplace violence always includes a physical assault.
True or False
2. Bullying or threats of violence should be:
 - a. ignored.
 - b. challenged right away.
 - c. reported.
3. If you work off-site, you should:
 - a. carry a personal alarm or cell phone.
 - b. establish a call-in schedule with a designated contact.
 - c. confirm credentials of those you have appointments with.
 - d. all of the above.
4. When confronted by a potentially violent person, you should firmly stand your ground until they see things your way.
True or False
5. You can always tell if someone has the potential for violence.
True or False

Answers:

1 False, 2 c, 3 d, 4 False, 5 False