



How to Complete Your WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PLAN

The statistics are sobering. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, homicide is now the fourth leading cause of fatal occupational injuries in the United States. And the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) notes that nearly two million American workers report having been victims of workplace violence every year. With the threat that real, workplace violence is a subject no employer can afford to ignore.

The question is how best to address it. When workplace violence occurs, many of us tend to see it as a sudden and unexpected act—unpredictable and unpreventable. However, there are many proven ways to reduce the threat of workplace violence and to minimize its impact.

It all begins with a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan. Every organization should have a comprehensive plan in place that identifies and offers ways to reduce risks, provides means for employees to raise concerns and report issues, communicates and reinforces emergency procedures, and establishes procedures to track progress over time.

There is no one-size-fits-all Workplace Violence Prevention Plan. Every organization and work environment is unique, and every industry has its own vulnerabilities and potential threats. Therefore, every Workplace Violence Prevention Plan should be unique—developed by and tailored to the specific needs of each organization.

There are certain essential elements that need to be included in any Workplace Violence Prevention Plan to ensure that it is comprehensive and offers the best opportunity for ongoing success. Your plan simply isn't complete without them.

EVALUATE ALL WORKPLACE HAZARDS.

When it comes to workplace violence, you cannot afford to leave any stone unturned. Factors that may seem innocuous can, under the right circumstances, become hazards and contribute to the impact of workplace violence. A thorough worksite analysis can help you identify risks and then take the appropriate steps to make your facility a safer workplace. For example:

- **Provide better visibility and good lighting throughout the facility**
- **Install security devices such as panic buttons, beepers, surveillance cameras, alarm systems, gunshot detection systems, two-way mirrors, card-key access systems and security guards**
- **Place curved mirrors at hallway intersections or concealed areas**
- **Control access to work areas**

- **Provide adequate staffing at all times**
- **Encourage carpooling and provide shuttle service to and from parking lots and public transportation**

KEEP COMPREHENSIVE RECORDS.

A Workplace Violence Prevention Plan relies on good recordkeeping. By encouraging employees to report incidents and maintaining those records, you can gauge the severity of potential problems at your facility, spot emerging trends and take remedial action. Your records should include:

- **Medical reports of work injury**
- **Incidents of abuse (including verbal abuse and other acts of aggression)**
- **Information on employees with a history of violence**
- **Training records**

REQUIRE MANAGEMENT PARTICIPATION.

The driving force behind your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan may come from the top of the organization, but it will only be successful if the entire management team is on board and committed to the effort. Your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan should assign specific roles and responsibilities to each member of the management team.

For example, all managers and supervisors must be held responsible for implementing and maintaining the plan in their work areas and for answering employee questions about it. Representatives from the management level should also be enlisted to participate in the group overseeing the effort: the Workplace Violence Prevention Group. And a management representative should be named as the Workplace Violence Prevention Program Administrator—the person charged with implementing the provisions of the plan.

By giving every employee at the supervisor level a role in developing and implementing the plan—and then holding them accountable—you will ensure that your program sustains itself for years to come.

GET EMPLOYEES INVOLVED FROM THE START.

Employees will feel invested in the plan's success if they play an active role in developing and implementing it. Volunteers should be sought from all levels of the organization to participate as members of your Workplace Violence Prevention Group—the team responsible for internally assessing your organization's vulnerability to workplace violence, reaching an agreement on preventive actions to be taken, and developing appropriate employee training.

Another way to ensure employee acceptance and adoption of your plan is to communicate regularly, organization-wide, on the activities and progress of the Workplace Violence Prevention Group. Rank-and-file employees should also be encouraged to contact the Workplace Violence Prevention Program Administrator or their peers in the Workplace Violence Prevention Group with ideas, suggestions, concerns and criticisms.

Ultimately, employees are your early warning system, as they are the people most likely to identify workplace violence risks before they become tragic events. The greater their buy-in, the better the outcomes.

TRAIN EMPLOYEES AND MANDATE REGULAR PRACTICE DRILLS.

In the event of a workplace violence incident, it is essential that employees respond swiftly and appropriately to minimize the impact. OSHA recommends¹ that any Workplace Violence Prevention Plan include:



1. <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3088.pdf>

- A preferred method for reporting emergencies
- An evacuation policy and procedure
- Emergency escape procedures and route assignments, such as floor plans, workplace maps, and safe or refuge areas
- Names, titles, departments and telephone numbers of individuals both within and outside your company to contact for additional information or explanation of duties and responsibilities under the plan
- Procedures for employees who will remain to perform or shut down critical operations, or perform other essential services that cannot be shut down during an evacuation
- Rescue and medical duties for any workers designated to perform them

In addition, it may be helpful to:

- Designate an assembly location and procedures to account for all employees after an evacuation
- Establish an alternative communications center to be used in the event of an emergency
- Maintain a secure on- or off-site location to store originals or duplicate copies of accounting records, legal documents, employees' emergency contact lists, and other essential records

Your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan should mandate regular practice drills as often as necessary to keep employees prepared. After each drill, evaluate its effectiveness and discuss the results at all levels of your organization with an eye toward identifying and addressing any weaknesses.

GIVE RESPONSE AS MUCH CONSIDERATION AS PREVENTION.

In an ideal world, your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan would account for every possible threat. But the fact is, not all incidents can be prevented. You must put as much effort into incident response as you do incident prevention.

While many existing security systems and procedures can be used to respond to workplace violence incidents, certain threats may warrant a more tailored solution. For example, during an active shooter event, identifying and locating gunshot activity quickly is crucial. A gunshot detection system can help provide information if the unthinkable should ever happen.

A gunshot detection system relies on sensors that are designed to quickly locate and report gunshot activity in specific areas. These sensors can be integrated with other security systems, including access control, mass notification and mobile applications. With a gunshot detection system installed, you gain the ability to locate gunshot activity quickly and take the actions necessary to protect lives and mount an appropriate response.

EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS REGULARLY.

Situations change. Workplaces evolve. New threats and vulnerabilities arise. That's why it's important to periodically review your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan and your organization's progress in implementing it. Doing so will enable you to identify any deficiencies and take the appropriate steps to address them. It will also provide a valuable opportunity to reassess policies and procedures and update them as necessary.

*For more information, call
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