

TEXAS CRIME PREVENTION
ASSOCIATION



WORK PLACE
VIOLENCE



PREVENTION AND RECOGNITION

WARNING SIGNS OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE

Personal Safety In the Workplace

A recent report, which examined incidents of workplace assaults and sexual harassment, rated Canada as having one of the highest occurrences in the world. It also identified occupations with high incidences of violence. These occupations included health care, social workers, teachers, taxi drivers and people working alone.

Fortunately, you can Take Action to avoid becoming the victim of crime while at work. Your best defense is to know and discuss what security measures are available through your employer. In addition, you should take other necessary precautions to protect yourself and your valuables.

SOURCES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE



The main sources of workplace violence can be classified as follows:

- Robbery / Theft
- Domestic Dispute
- Employer / Employee Directed Revenge

COMMON TYPES OF VIOLENCE

- Verbal Abuse
- Disruptive Behavior
- Threats
- Physical Violence
- Sexual Harassment

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT A formalized written policy statement on Workplace Violence should be developed and should include sections on the following:

- A Commitment to Safety
- Code of Conduct
- Management Response Team
- Reporting / Documenting Training
- Train Supervisors and employees to recognize warning signs of potentially violent persons.
- Educate all staff about workplace violence.
- Establish proper security procedures.
- Provide counseling and stress debriefing to staff members.



SECURITY CHECKLIST

- There should be a receptionist at the entrance to control access at all times
- All visitors should be escorted in and out of work areas
- Staff should be encouraged to challenge and assist any unaccompanied strangers they encounter in the workplace
- Keep restrooms locked when not occupied
- Have procedures in place for dealing with suspicious mail and packages
- Have a prompt response to incidents of conflict in the workplace
- Develop and use a Crisis Management Plan
- Resists change
- Sullen, angry and/or depressed
- Identifies with or praises acts of workplace violence
- Recently collected or obtained a weapon
- Uses threats, intimidation and manipulation towards others
- They are Paranoid - thinking others are out to "get" them
- Over-reacts to criticism
- Blames other people for their own mistakes
- Has had recent Police encounters
- Has a history of assault
- Other persons are afraid of, or apprehensive about this person



STAGES OF AGGRESSION

- Person becomes anxious - "on edge"
- Displays negative attitude and/or behavior (refusal to cooperate and questioning)
- Verbal - Physical release
- Calms down

RESPONSES TO THESE STAGES

- Show support and empathy for them
- Be firm and set limits
- Escape and get assistance
- If future contact is expected - set firm ground rules

BE AWARE OF NON-VERBALS

Watch out for non-verbal clues that someone is becoming violent:

- Personal space issues
- Body language (clenching / unclenching fists)
- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice

TYPES OF THREATS

Direct - "I'm going to kill you"

Conditional - "If you report me - you'll regret it"

Veiled - "Be careful going home tonight" "I know where you live"

Report and Document all threats immediately

DEALING WITH THREATS

Do:

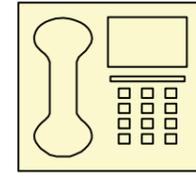
- Stay calm
- Assess the situation
- Agree with them
- Report and document immediately

Don't:

- Panic
- Beg or plead
- Argue or escalate the situation
- Minimize the threat
- Fail to report the incident

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS Critical Management Steps

- Call 911 Immediately
- Secure and Control the Area
- Account for everyone in the area
- Ensure their safety
- Evacuate if required
- Assist Emergency Crews
- Have floor plans available if required
- Have employee lists available
- Have all departmental phone numbers on hand
- Provide suspect information if relevant



WORKING ALONE

If you work shifts or work into the evening alone, it is wise to take precautions to reduce your vulnerability and protect yourself:

- Whenever possible, try to avoid working alone.
- If you are required to work alone, develop a check-in system with a friend or family member who you can let know you are okay. Give them instructions on what to do if you do not check-in on time (i.e. calling the police or a manager).
- If you work in an office make sure all doors and windows are locked. Turn on several lights to make it appear the building is occupied.
- Let someone know when you are leaving, the route you will be taking and when you are expected to arrive home.
- If possible have someone escort you to your vehicle. Try to park your vehicle in a well-lighted location close to the door.

OTHER SAFETY STEPS

Be cautious about giving out personal information.

Your office should have a strict policy protecting you and other employees by not giving out personal information. This policy should include never providing a home phone number or address of an employee. Also, never disclose that a person is on vacation or on business travel. This could be setting that person up for a crime. A message should be taken and the person advised that the employee will return their call at a later date.

Never leave valuables (purses, laptops, cell phones, etc.) on a desk if you are away from them.

Take these items with you or lock them away. Never leave a wallet in a coat pocket.

Always keep money in a safe place.

Even if it's only the coffee fund never leave it in an unlocked drawer during the day. At night put the money in a safe or remove it from the building altogether.

Watch for signs of unusual behavior.

This is where it is very important to trust your instincts. If a client or co-worker makes you feel uncomfortable, discuss the situation with a supervisor or co-worker you trust.

If you feel threatened by the other person do not hesitate to call the police. Dealing with a potential problem in the early stages will often prevent the situation from escalating. Develop a plan to deal with potential problems. Avoid confrontations with co-workers and be aware of the emotional climate at work. Be assertive regarding any unwanted sexual attention at work. It is recommended that you keep a record of repeated incidents of sexual harassment. Report it to your employer.

In an emergency, get to a safe area and call 911 right away.

**IN AN EMERGENCY
CALL 911**