

Loss Control



FARMERS

Information Bulletin

Workplace Violence

Most workplace homicides are committed during the course of a robbery while less than 10 percent are committed by coworkers or former employees. Firearms are used to commit the vast majority of workplace homicides.

Workplace violence is one of the most significant yet least recognized problems facing many organizations. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates the economic cost of workplace violence nationwide in excess of \$120 billion a year.

While anyone can become a victim of workplace violence, some industries and occupations are at much greater risk for violence and assault. The occupations with the greatest risk of homicide are cab drivers, chauffeurs, law enforcement personnel, gas station and garage employees, and security guards. Nonfatal assaults occur most often in service and retail trades. This would include grocery stores and eating and drinking establishments.

To counter the possibility of violence in the workplace, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has developed a number of strategies to reduce the risk of workplace violence. Employers can use the following strategies to improve awareness and prevention of violence in the workplace:

- *Develop and implement a policy statement*
- *Conduct a threat assessment of the workplace*
- *Conduct a hazard assessment of the operations*
- *Perform a workplace security analysis*
- *Conduct a workplace survey*
- *Develop and implement control and prevention policies and procedures.*

- *Conduct employee training and education*
- *Develop and implement incident prevention and investigation policies and procedures*
- *Maintain accurate records of all workplace violence incidents*

Not every strategy is appropriate for every workplace, so employers and employees should use the strategies appropriate for their workplace.

A policy statement may address the purpose and scope of the policy, definitions of workplace threats and violence, and consequences for violations.

Conducting a threat assessment is a team approach that represents all areas and levels of the company. It will assess the vulnerability of the workplace and reach agreement on preventive actions needing to be taken.

The threat assessment team should conduct a hazard assessment. They may take into consideration OSHA logs, incident reports, assaults or near-assaults, insurance records, police records, accident investigations, training records, and grievances.

The threat assessment team can conduct a workplace security analysis to check for potential hazards, inspect the workplace, and review at-risk tasks. At-risk tasks include exchange of money with the public, working alone or in small numbers, working late night or early morning, guarding valuable property or possessions, working in community settings, and staffing levels.

A workplace survey by the threat assessment team will survey and analyze results of employee survey responses and

the results of inspection surveys.

Control and prevention will result in recommendations from the threat assessment team. These recommendations can include engineering controls, building vulnerabilities, work area design, and policies and procedures.

Training and education for employees, supervisors and managers every two years should focus on the following topics. Review of the definition of workplace violence, program description, reporting instructions, recognition and response, security hazard identification, and review of security equipment and procedures such as defusing hostile situations, emergency response, and post incident procedures.

Incident prevention and investigation is to be designed to ensure that all reported incidents would be evaluated by the threat assessment team to determine program revisions and security reassessment.

Accurate recordkeeping needs to be kept on all incidents of workplace violence, lost-time injuries with doctor and supervisor reports as needed, verbal and physical abuse, aggressive behavior, and the minutes of threat assessment team meetings.

Additional information on workplace violence can be found at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) at their website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hompage.html>