

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE



Andrew Tirmenstein
Senior Project Manager
1-800-508-8034
atirmenstein@keramida.com

1

Violence
is the
PROBLEM,
NOT the
solution

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Raise overall awareness of the increased risk involving workplace violence.
- 2) Prevent violence from occurring in the workplace.
- 3) Maintain employee safety.

2

CASE STUDIES

August 20, 1986 - Edmund, Oklahoma, Post Office Massacre - Patrick H. Sherrill, a postal worker, reported to work after receiving a formal reprimand the day before. He was armed with 3 semiautomatic pistols. By the end of the day he had killed 14 workers and injured 6 before killing himself. The phrase "going postal" was coined from this incident.

September 14, 1989 - In Louisville, Kentucky, Joseph Wesbecker armed with a AK-47 semiautomatic assault rifle, 2 MAC-11 semiautomatic pistols, a 38 caliber handgun and a 9 millimeter semiautomatic pistol kills 8 co-workers at Standard Gravure Corporation then kills himself. He was placed on disability leave the day before due to mental problems.

June 18 1990 - In Jacksonville, Florida, James Pough opened fired at a General Motors Acceptance Corp. office killing 9 people. He then took his own life. He was said to be angry because of his car being repossessed.

April 20, 1999 - At Columbine Highschool in Littleton, Colorado, eighteen old Eric Harris and 17 year old Dylan Klebold killed 12 fellow students and one teacher before committing suicide.



3

CASE STUDIES CONTINUED

June 22, 2018 - Barberton, Ohio at J & R Engineering - Two co-workers were involved in an altercation when one took out a gun and shot the other. The shooter had been holding a weapon under disability which could mean either he was a convicted felon, an addict, or someone with a mental illness.

June 28, 2018 - Annapolis, Maryland at the Capital Gazette - An armed man enters newsroom and opens fire with a shotgun while using smoke grenades to maximize the chaos. Five people were killed and two injured. The attacker had a grudge against the newspaper and journalists due to an article that was published about him in 2011.

July 4, 2018 - Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ontario at a Flex-N-Gate - A man attacked a female co-worker and beat her severely. Motive was unknown.

July 13, 2018 - Gulfport, Mississippi at Warren Paving - A former employee entered the business and fired shots inside the building. Nobody was injured. The shooter Had been recently fired from the company.



4

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE STATISTICS

- ▶ Around 2 million US workers report workplace violence per year. It is occurring at epidemic proportions.
- ▶ Approximately 18,000 assaults in the workplace are documented weekly.
- ▶ About 25% of workplace violence goes unreported.
- ▶ It is estimated that 1 out of every 4 employees will be victimized in some way while at work.
- ▶ Around \$121 billion is lost annually due to assaults that occur in the workplace.
- ▶ Workplace violence is the #2 cause of death for women.
- ▶ Upwards of 30,000 rape or sexual assaults on women are reported annually.
- ▶ 21% of all workplace homicides are committed by co-workers.
- ▶ Robberies account for 85% of workplace violence deaths.
- ▶ Shootings occur in the following percentages:
 - Businesses - 45.6%
 - Schools 24.4%
 - Government facilities - 10%
 - Other (churches, social or sporting events, conferences, etc.) 10%



5

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Definition: Any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation or other threatening disruptive behavior that creates hostility at the workplace. It creates a risk to the physical and/or emotional health and safety of an employee or multiple employees.

Examples include the following:

- ▶ Physical assault - slapping, kicking, pushing, punching, rape
- ▶ Verbal abuse - humiliation, teasing, ridiculing, spreading rumors, threats
- ▶ Aggressive communication - insults, finger pointing, shouting, invasion of space, hostile e-mails
- ▶ Domestic abuse
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Active shooter
- ▶ Homicide



6

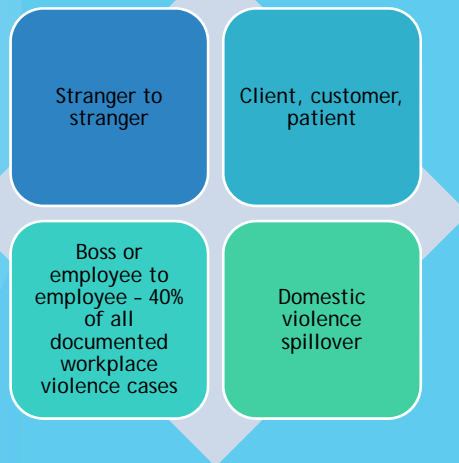


WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IS NOT...

- ▶ Annoying behavior
- ▶ Disliking a co-worker
- ▶ A rude customer
- ▶ Being unhappy
- ▶ Disagreeing

7

CATEGORIES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE



8

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF TROUBLE



- ▶ History of violence
- ▶ Threatening or intimidating behavior
- ▶ Demonstration of increased personal stress
- ▶ Negative personality characteristics
- ▶ Obvious changes in mood or behavior
- ▶ Unkept appearance and/or poor personal hygiene
- ▶ Social isolation
- ▶ Drug and alcohol abuse
- ▶ Dramatic changes in work performance
- ▶ **Observable grievances with threats and plans of retribution**

Be concerned with the exhibition of multiple signs and the intensity for which they are being shown.



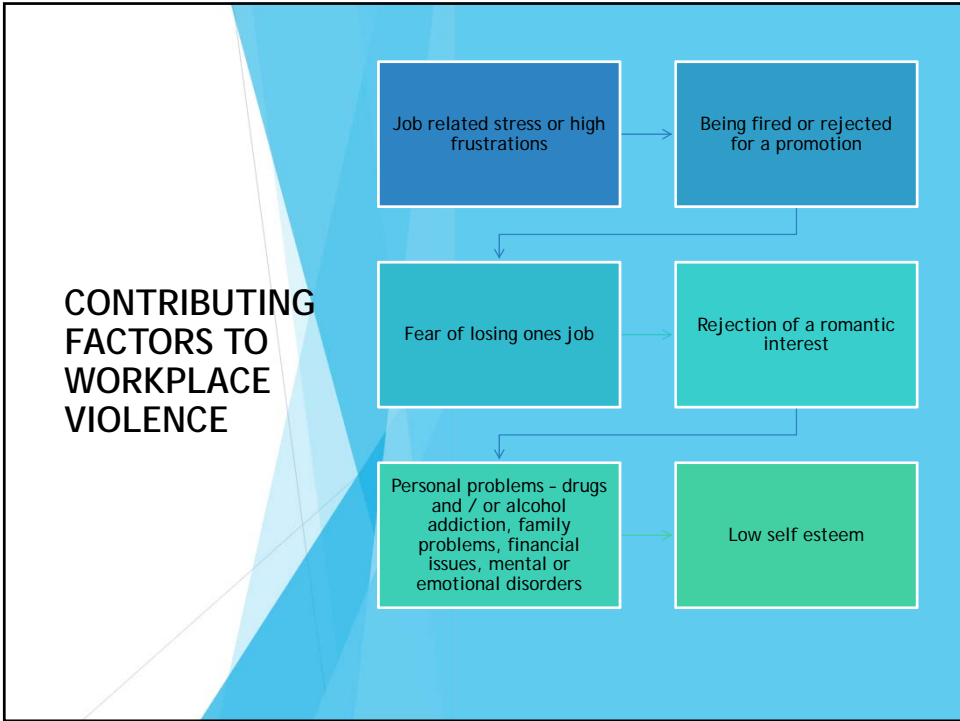
9

BEHAVIORS THAT MAY BE MORE PREDICTIVE OF VIOLENCE



- Forceful of beliefs on others, spreading rumors or gossip
- Continual argumentative and/or unreasonable behavior
- Disregarding the health and safety of others
- Regular open protest about authority, the company and/or another employee
- Unaccountability and the need to blame others
- Acts of intimidation or instigation of fear in others
- Addictive and/or obsessive behavior
- Fixation on issues
- Increasingly paranoid or suspicious behavior
- Extreme depression
- Having nothing left to lose

10



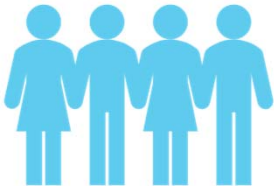
11

HIGH RISK GROUPS FOR VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE



- Police
- Correctional officers
- Healthcare workers
- Public works employees
- Teachers
- Managers and supervisors

12



THE HUMAN FACTOR

Sometimes people just need help. Is it a problem employee or an employee with problems?

Use critical thinking as you investigate. Be factual, not opinionated or judgmental.

Communicate with one another and ask questions.

Get to know the people you work with!
Be sensitive to others!

Help people to see the importance of their role for the success of the company as a whole.

Be respectful and nice!
People need to show respect to ne another! A kind word and smile really do go a long way.

13

REPORT...REPORT...REPORT



- ▶ Always error on the side of caution. It is better to be safe than sorry.
- ▶ Think of the potential consequences if not reported.
- ▶ Immediately contact supervisor and/or human resources to alert of concerns and potential danger.
- ▶ Immediately notify authorities in the case that actual threats are made or inferred.
- ▶ By not reporting you are enabling further behavior.
- ▶ Only report facts not opinions or judgements.

KERAMIDA
ENGINEERS • SCIENTISTS • PLANNERS
GLOBAL EHS & SUSTAINABILITY SERVICES

14

REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING

- ▶ Afraid of retaliation from person
- ▶ Lack of confidence that concern will be addressed
- ▶ Fear of not being believed
- ▶ Not knowing who to tell
- ▶ Do not want to draw attention to one's self
- ▶ Not want to be looked at as tattling or snitching.

ESCALATION IF LEFT UNCHECKED

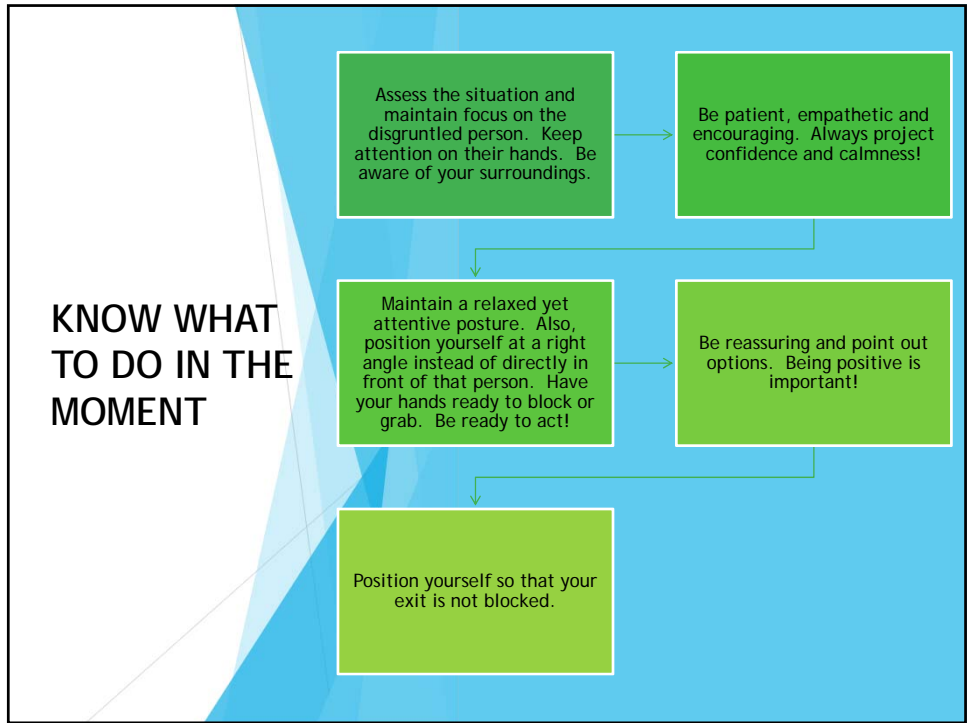
INCIVILITIES AND UNPROFESSIONALISM
(Dysfunctional Behavior)



HARRASSMENT AND BULLYING
(Hostile Work Environment)



WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
(Out of Control Behavior)




17

PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS

ARE YOU READY?

- Treat others with respect and build trust.
- Always be aware of your surroundings! Know where the exits are and how to get to them quickly.
- Watch people! Be on the lookout for signs and/or patterns of behavior that may be an indicator of violence.
- If you see something...say something! Report a concern.
- Remain vigilant and always think ahead!
- Act from strength not from fear!

18



PER THE OSHA GENERAL DUTY CLAUSE, SECTION 5(A)(1), CORPORATIONS HAVE A DUTY OF CARE RESPONSIBILITY

Employers are required to provide their employees with a place of employment that “is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.”

Ensuring that the workplace does not become hostile or violent falls under this requirement.

19



CORPORATIONS MUST BE PREPARED ORGANIZATIONALLY

- 1) Establish effective and principle centered leadership.
- 2) Maintain a healthy culture.
- 3) Implement a workplace violence prevention program.
- 4) Provide adequate security.

20

1) LEADERSHIP

- ▶ Consistently demonstrates professionalism. Has purpose and integrity.
- ▶ Values and engages employees.
- ▶ Is accountable and has ability to follow through with action.
- ▶ Immediately addresses all negative and threatening behaviors.
- ▶ Promotes a culture of respect, trust and confidence throughout the organization.

“THE CULTURE OF ANY ORGANIZATION IS SHAPED BY THE WORST BEHAVIOR THE LEADER IS WILLING TO TOLERATE.” Gruenter and Whitaker



21

2) CULTURE



A clear and distinct purpose or vision is understood by the organization.

Safety is fully integrated. Awareness is raised to potential risks and concerns.

Recognizes the human factor. Values employees.

Supports learning opportunities and encourages professional growth.

Functions as an organization without silos. Relationship building and teamwork is encouraged.

Allows for open communication and sharing of information throughout organization.

Cultivates positivity, kindness and respect throughout.

Develop the best “shock absorption” protocol for separations.

Sustains progress.

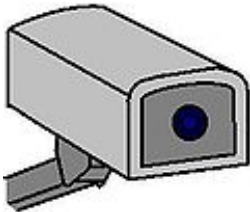
22

3) WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

- ▶ Regularly assesses culture and identifies vulnerabilities. Examination of trends.
- ▶ Establishes workplace violence policy and code of conduct. Obtains written commitment from organization.
- ▶ Implements an "active shooter" emergency response plan.
- ▶ Initiates a "zero tolerance" policy for bullying and enforces disciplinary / corrective actions accordingly.
- ▶ Provides training on policies, laws, awareness and reporting procedures.
- ▶ Provides drills and training events on active shooter response.
- ▶ Implements an employee assistance program (AEP).

23

4) SECURITY



- ▶ Full background checks.
- ▶ Deterrence measures. Trained personnel are on site.
- ▶ Visitors (contractors, suppliers, etc.) are accounted for.
- ▶ The perimeter and special interest areas are secured.
- ▶ There are no blind spots within the organization.
- ▶ Administrative controls are in place. Cameras and / or video surveillance are utilized.
- ▶ Adequate lighting is available throughout building.
- ▶ Entryways and exits are controlled.
- ▶ Roles and responsibilities are established among key figures
- ▶ Communication and alert notification systems
- ▶ Relationships are established with local law enforcement.
- A map of facility is provided and annual visits are arranged.
- Access to facility is allowed! Badges and/or keys are provided.

24

SUMMARY

Knowledge is power!! Understand what workplace violence is, know the potential warning signs and be familiar with possible contributing factors.

Be conscious of the human factor. Advance the human side of the organization. Respect must be fostered throughout the organization and a zero tolerance policy enforced.

You see something...say something!! Promote effective communication throughout.

Take immediate action against all threatening behavior.
Immediately report any concerns!

Know how to diffuse a potentially violent situation.

Be personally prepared! Be aware, take security measures seriously and always have a plan in place.

Be organizationally prepared! There must be effective leadership and a good supporting culture. The implementation of a workplace violence prevention program and security measures is of the utmost importance.

Have policies and procedures in place. Provide employee training.

Emergency planning...run, hide and fight.



25

CONCLUSION

Each one of us can make a difference.
Together we make change!

Barbara Mikulski



26