

A. Lesson Goal:

By the end of the training session, workers will:

- Understand some of the causes of workplace violence
- Know how to reduce the risk of workplace violence.

B. OSHA Regulation:

General Duty Clause (Section 5A.1, Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970)

C. Have Handy:

- Examples of your company's security materials: badges, signs, sign-in sheets, etc.

D. Background for Instructor:

1. Introduction: Violence Is a Serious Problem

It's hard to go anywhere these days without worrying, at least a little bit, about your physical security. Unfortunately, the workplace can't be considered a safe haven from violence either. Even though most workplaces are relatively safe, there is always the risk of a confrontation with an outsider who seeks to steal your belongings or do you harm, or even from a co-worker or customer.

One in six violent crimes occur on the job, and certain types of workplaces show a much greater incidence of violence than others. These include:

- Places where cash is regularly handled (such as retail stores and banks)
- Places where employees work alone or late at night (such as convenience stores and gas stations)
- Places where there is regular contact with criminals (such as prisons)
- Places where there may be highly emotional situations (such as hospitals and certain types of social work situations).

Even if you don't work in one of these occupations, you still may need to deal with a potentially violent situation. The key to minimizing your risk is to know how to recognize and avoid these situations before you or someone else gets hurt.

2. What Causes Violence in the Workplace?

The most common cause of workplace violence is robbery—that is, an outsider (a stranger or even a customer) wanting to steal your valuables and threatens, or actually commits, an injury in the process. But violence surfaces in other situations as well:

- A co-worker under emotional stress, either from problems on the job or at home
- A relative, friend, or acquaintance who follows a worker into the workplace to do harm
- A co-worker, customer, or outsider whose behavior is affected by drugs or alcohol.

Regardless of the cause, an incident of violence can be very distressing to everyone involved. Obviously, the victim suffers the most, either physically, emotionally, or both. But people who witness violence also can be emotionally affected—in fact, so

can anyone who knows about a violent incident happening to a friend or colleague. Violence can affect everyone's job in terms of morale, productivity, and overall enjoyment. That's why it's so important to take the proper precautions to prevent violence in the workplace.

3. Following Security Procedures

Your company has taken certain security measures to help keep the workplace safe from violent incidents. Here are some of the steps you should always follow to keep yourself and your workplace as secure as possible:

- Don't let visitors simply walk into your work area. Instead, greet them in the lobby and escort them in personally.
- Alert security if there are unescorted strangers in the workplace.
- If required, wear an identification badge on the job at all times.
- Don't let others have your identification badge, pass card, or security code.
- Keep briefcases and purses locked and stored out of sight.
- Keep the phone numbers of security and police near your phone, and immediately report any signs of break-ins or theft.
- Arrange a "danger signal" with co-workers, to be used if something or someone appears to be dangerous.
- Take extra care in dark stairways, elevators, and parking lots, and avoid situations that make you feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- Try to avoid working alone late at night. If you must work late, let someone else know where you are.
- Generally, try to avoid being alone when walking to and from your car or public transportation.

If you are ever the actual victim of a robber, it's important to remember not to try to be a hero. Run away if you can. If not, don't hesitate to give up your money and other valuables—they're far less important than your life! Try to stay calm enough to be able to give police useful information after the incident is over.

4. Preventing Violence from Erupting

Although it's unlikely, it's possible that you will encounter an actual or potentially violent situation with a co-worker or customer.

Warning Signals!

Take it seriously if someone you know threatens violence or revenge against another, regularly tries to intimidate others, talks a lot about weapons, believes others are "out to get" him or her, or consistently blames others for his or her own problems. Similarly, tell a supervisor or security if a customer or co-worker becomes exceptionally angry or abusive. There's no justification for such "tantrums" in the workplace, and they may indicate the possibility of even more violent behavior in the future.

Act to Reduce Tension

If you ever need to actually deal with a violent co-worker or customer, remember to respond in a way that reduces, not increases, the tension. Speak and act calmly, show respect, and focus on the behavior, not the person. Use the agreed-upon danger signal to alert other co-workers. And never respond with anger, threats, or violence of your own.

5. Conclusion

Violence in the workplace should be recognized for what it is: a serious safety issue, but one that should not cause undue fear or worry. Most violent incidents can be prevented by using common sense. This includes observing all security rules and

precautions, keeping valuables out of sight, staying alert for situations and people that seem “wrong” or out of place, and keeping your wits about you in an actual or potentially violent situation. Remember, too, that if you think that a breach of security or a potentially violent incident might be happening, it’s never wrong to notify a supervisor or security. That’s the best way to prevent a bad situation from becoming much worse.

E. Examples and Practical Exercises: