Improving Your Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Training from the
NJ Work Environment Council

WEC

Improving Your Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Purpose

To analyze your facility's workplace violence prevention program and determine the steps you should take to improve it.

This activity has one task.

TASK

In your groups review the factsheets on pages 8-23. Then based on your own experience and the factsheets complete the survey below. After completing the survey answer the question on page 6.

Preliminary Workplace Violence Facility Assessment Worksheet			
1. Based on your own experience, how would you describe your facility, as a crisis-prone or crisis-prepared organization? (Please explain.)			
2. Where in the facility would a violence-related incident most likely occur? [ ] front desk [ ] exits [ ] deliveries [ ] private offices [ ] ER [ ] parking lot [ ] bathroom [ ] entrance [ ] admissions [ ] radiology [ ] other Other (specify):			
Check (✓)	Yes	No	Not Sure
3. Does your facility have a written policy on how to handle a violent situation? *(see Factsheets 2 and 3)*			
4. Do all of the employees at your facility know when and how to request the assistance of a co-worker? *(Factsheet 3 and 7)*			
5. Do all of the employees at your facility know when and how to request the assistance of the police? *(Factsheet 3 and 7)*			
6. Do all of the employees at your facility know what to do if they are verbally threatened, threatened with violence, or harassed on the job? *(Factsheet 3 and 7)*			
7. Do all employees know what to do if they are the victims of workplace violence? *(Factsheet 3 and 7)*			
8. Do employees at your facility work alone?			
9. Does your facility have security inside and outside of the building? *(see Factsheet 6 and 7)*			

Check (✔)	Yes	No	Not Sure
10. Does your facility have security in the parking lots?			
11. Do all of the employees at your facility receive workplace violence training? *(see Factsheet 8)*			
12. Is there a designated threat assessment team at your facility? *(see Factsheet 4 and 5)*			
13. Is there a system in place for keeping track of workplace violence incidents in your facility *(see Factsheet 10)*			
14. Are there established procedures for conducting an investigation after an incident has been reported? *(see Factsheet 9)*			

(continued)

TASK (continued)

Based on the survey and/or the system flaws you identified in Task 2 of the Systems of Safety Activity what actions or steps will you take to begin eliminating and/or minimizing the risks of workplace violence at your facility? (List the actions in order of priority.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

1. Crisis-Prone Vs. Crisis-Prepared Organizations

According to the American Management Association, 65% of employers lack policies specifically designed to deal with actual or potential violence within or outside the workplace. The programs that are in place rely mainly on conventional disciplinary procedures that do not effectively prevent crises and in some cases make matters worse.

Warning Signs
In the absence of a clearly defined violence-prevention policy that includes a joint labor-management problem-solving mechanism, supervisors, employees and union representatives are not likely to report warning signs that would indicate the need for early intervention. Employers and unions that do nothing to prevent or prepare for the possibility of a crisis are more likely to experience severe disruptions and harm.

The differences between organizations that are prepared and those that are not have been described by researchers as "crisis-prone vs crisis-prepared" organizations.

Crisis-Prone vs. Crisis-Prepared Organizations	
Crisis-Prone	**Crisis-Prepared**
Reacts to crisis, rather than reading the warning signs that might allow problems to be prevented or mitigated.	Maintains effective systems for collecting, reporting and analyzing signs of distress at an early stage.
Pays lip service to human issues but pays real attention only to bottom line figures and business interests.	Cultivates a sense of mutual interest among stakeholders, including unions, in responding effectively to problems before they reach a critical stage.
Holds fast to denial, summarily expelling or punishing employees perceived as deviant, rather than confronting their behavior and its causes.	Develops and fully disseminates in advance a policy for dealing with potential and actual crises.
"Delegates" responsibility for programs and polices involving employee welfare to lower levels while top leadership remains remote, especially during times of change and stress.	Encourages a climate in which employees feel free to communicate their distress to management and management feels a responsibility to respond.
Directs communication in a crisis outward (e.g., toward the public, stockholders, and the media) rather than inward, toward employees.	Engages in effective problem-solving rather than confrontation.
Remains mired in adversarial standoff, thwarting genuine internal communication and problem-solving.	Does not deny problems or seek to avoid dealing with them by expelling or suppressing "deviants."

Source: T.C. Pauchant and I.I. Mitroff, *Transforming the Crisis-Prone Organization*, 1993.

2. Elements of a Successful Workplace Violence Program

To be successful, a facility's violence prevention program must have commitment from top management and must involve supervisors, employees and union representatives. Employees should be involved both individually and collectively through participation in work site assessment, assisting in the development of clear effective procedures and identifying existing and potential hazards. Employee knowledge and experience should be incorporated into any written plan to correct and prevent safety and security hazards.

The elements of an effective workplace violence prevention program include:

- A clearly written company workplace violence policy statement

- Establishing a Threat Assessment Team

- Conducting a Hazard Assessment

- Workplace hazard control and prevention

- Training and education

- Incident reporting, investigation, follow-up and evaluation

- Recordkeeping

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

3. The Written Policy Statement

A clearly written policy statement that conveys management's concern and commitment to employee safety and health is an important element of an effective workplace violence prevention program. The policy should be easily accessible to all employees and copies should be made available to employees upon request.

Written Policy Statement Checklist	
✓	The policy should provide adequate authority and budgetary resources to responsible parties so that identified goals and assigned responsibilities can be met.
✓	It should include and encourage employee participation in the design and implementation of the program.
✓	It should state clearly that violence at the workplace will not be tolerated and that management and the union have developed and implemented a program that will reduce incidents of violence.
✓	The policy statement should state that management will apply the policy consistently and fairly to all employees, including supervisors and managers.
✓	The policy should also state that it requires prompt and accurate reporting of violent incidents, whether or not physical injury has occurred.
✓	Finally, the policy statement should state that it will not discriminate against victims of workplace violence.

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

4. The Threat Assessment Team

The initial step in developing a workplace violence prevention program is to designate a Threat Assessment Team that will be responsible for assessing the workplace's vulnerability to violence and reaching agreement on the preventive actions to be taken.

The team should also be responsible for recommending and implementing employee training programs on workplace violence, implementing plans for responding to acts of violence and communicating internally with employees. The responsibility of auditing the overall program should also rest with the Threat Assessment Team.

Threat Assessment Team membership should include representatives of the following:

- hospital administration

- staff management

- frontline staff

- union representatives

- security

- finance

- legal

- human resources

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

5. Hazard Assessment

Records Review
The Threat Assessment Team can begin its work by reviewing previous incidents of violence. A review and analysis of existing records is necessary to develop a baseline and create an appropriate plan to correct the hazards. The team should analyze the following:

- OSHA 300 logs and any other appropriate required records

- Incident reports

- Records of, or information compiled for recording of, assault incidents or near assault incidents

- Medical records

- Insurance records

- Police reports

- Accident investigations

- Training records

- Grievances

- Other relevant records of information (i.e., minutes of meetings, etc.)

The Threat Assessment Team should identify and analyze any apparent trends in assault incidents relating to specific risk factors, departments, units, job titles, unit activities, time of day, etc. The team should also communicate with similar local businesses, trade associations, and community and civic groups concerning their experiences with workplace violence.

(continued)

5. Hazard Assessment (continued)

Workplace Survey and Security Analysis
A questionnaire or survey should be distributed to employees to identify the potential for violent incidents and to identify or confirm the need for improved security measures. The team may develop their own questionnaires, with employee input into design, format and dissemination. All employees should be encouraged to complete the questionnaire.

In addition to a records review and conducting a survey, the Threat Assessment Team should focus on physical environment risk factors. They should inspect the workplace as well as evaluate the work tasks of employees to determine the presence of hazards, conditions, operations and situations that might place workers at risk of occupational assault incidents. The team should conduct follow-up inspections of the workplace and observe hazardous work tasks on a periodic basis.

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

Employee Security Survey

This survey will help detect security problems in your work area. Please fll out the form, get your co-workers to fill it out and review it to see where the potential for major security problems lies.

Name:_____

Work Location: _____

  1. Do either of these two conditions exist in your facility?

    [ ]   Work alone during working hours
    [ ]   No notification given to anyone when you nish work

    Are these conditions a problem? If so when, please describe. (For example: Mondays, during the night shift, during shift changes, etc.)

  2. Do you have complaints or concerns about any of the following at your facility?

    [ ]   How to follow the written policy for   [ ]   Harassment
          addressing general problems?   [ ]   Working alone
    [ ]   The written policy on how to handle a   [ ]   Alarm System(s)
          violent situation?   [ ]   Security in and out of the building
    [ ]   When and how to request the   [ ]   Security in parking lots
          assistance of a co-worker
    [ ]   When and how to request the
          assistance of police
    [ ]   Verbal threats
    [ ]   Threat of violence

  3. Where in the facility would a violence-related incident most likely occur?

    [ ] front desk   [ ] exits   [ ] deliveries   [ ] private off ces   [ ] ER   [ ] other
    [ ] parking lot   [ ] bathroom   [ ] entrance   [ ] admissions   [ ] radiology

    Other (specify):   _____

  4. Have you ever noticed a situation that could lead to a violent incident?

  5. Have you missed work because of a potential violent act(s) committed during your course of employment?

  6. Do you receive workplace violence-related training or assistance of any kind?

  7. Has anything happened recently at your facility that could have led to violence?

  8. Can you comment about the situation?

6. Physical Environment Control Methods

The Threat Assessment Team should identify and institute a combination of physical environment control methods designed to eliminate or minimize the risks of assault incidents.

General Building, Workstation and Area Designs
Review the design of all new or renovated facilities to ensure safe and secure conditions for all employees. Work areas and furniture arrangements should be designed to prevent entrapment of workers and to minimize the potential for assault incidents. Appropriate lighting systems should be provided for all indoor building areas as well as grounds around the facility and in parking areas.

Access to employee work areas should be controlled (e.g., locked doors, buzzers, card access, etc.). However, security should not conflict with Life Safety Code requirements. Doors should be locked to prevent intrusions but employees must be able to easily exit the building.

Security Equipment
Electronic alarm systems, closed circuit televisions, metal detection systems, cellular phones, beepers, CB radios or hand-held alarms or noise devices in field situations should be examined and maintained on a regular basis to ensure their effectiveness.

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

7. Work Practice Controls and Procedures

Written procedures and work practice controls should be clear and understood by all employees. Depending upon information gathered and analyzed by the Threat Assessment Team, controls and procedures may include the following:

- Identification cards, sign-in and sign-out procedures and an escort policy for non-employees

- Internal communication systems to respond to emergencies

- Policy and procedures for how to deal with emergency or hostage situations

- Security procedures for:
  – employees who work late or off hours
  – accounting for field staff
  – when to involve in-house security or local law enforcement in an assault incident
  – banning weapons in facilities unless authorized
  – responding to assault incidents

- Procedures for employees to follow when entering any locations where they feel threatened or unsafe

- Assistance to employees who are victims of domestic violence

- Procedures to ensure confidentiality and safety for affected employees

- Employee training on awareness, avoidance, and action to take to prevent incidents

- Modifying work practices that are identified by the hazard assessment where employees face increased risk of violence

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

8. Employee Training and Education

Regardless of their level of risk, all employees should receive workplace violence training on company time. The training should use easily understandable terminology and it should be given in the language spoken by the employees.

The training should include:

- techniques for recognizing the potential for violence

- procedures, policies and work environment arrangements developed to control the risk to workers

- proper use and maintenance of security hardware

- the procedures for responding to incidents of violence, including emergency and hostage situations

- how to obtain medical assistance and follow up

- procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of violence

Specialized Training
Workers with job tasks or locations that place them at higher risk for violent incidents should be provided specialized training in addition to the topics outlined above. The training should be designed to deal with the nature of the risks.

Managers, supervisors and union representatives should get additional training that enables them to recognize a potentially hazardous situation and make the necessary changes in policy and procedures. They should also receive training to ensure that employees are not placed in assignments that compromise safety and in methods and procedures which will reduce the security hazards. Finally, they should be trained to behave compassionately towards workers when an incident does occur. They need to ensure that employees follow safe work practices and receive appropriate training.

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

9. Incident Reporting, Investigation, Follow-up and Evaluation

Incident Reporting

A procedure for reporting workplace violence should apply not only to incidents that result in physical injury, but also verbal abuse, threats of violence, etc. The procedure should be in writing, easily understood by all employees, and take into account issues of confidentiality.

All incidents should be reported to the Threat Assessment Team. The reports and their evaluation will provide the basis for identifying program improvements.

Immediately after an incident occurs the employer should:

- report it to the local police department when appropriate

- secure work areas where disturbances occurred

- ensure the physical safety of employees and others remaining in the area as soon as possible

- ensure that no work area is left short-staffed while others assist the victim(s) or help in securing the area

- assess the work area—if it was disturbed or damaged during the incident—to determine if it is safe

- provide critical incident debriefings to victims, witnesses and other affected employees

Incident Investigation

After an incident or near miss occurs, a detailed investigation should be conducted as soon as possible. The investigation should focus on fact-finding prevention, not finger pointing and fault finding. It should be conducted by the Threat Assessment Team and they should do the following:

- collect facts on who, what, when where and how the incident occurred

- record the information

- identify contributing causes

- recommend corrective action

- encourage appropriate follow-up

- consider changes in controls, procedures, and policy

Follow-up

Procedures should be established for responding to the medical and psychological needs of employees after an assault incident. Affected employees should be provided with the appropriate medial and psychological treatment and follow-up. Provisions for medical confidentiality and protection from discrimination must be included to prevent the victims from suffering further loss.

Evaluation

After the initial security analysis, the Threat Assessment Team should conduct periodic physical evaluations of the work site. The evaluations should focus on the identification and assessment of hazards and address changes in work practices.

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

10. Recordkeeping

An effective recordkeeping system helps in selecting the appropriate level of controls to prevent the recurrence of workplace violence and in determining required training. Records should be kept up to date.

Effective Recordkeeping System	
✓	**OSHA 300 Logs** OSHA requires an entry for any injury which requires more than first aid, causes loss of consciousness, requires modified duty, or results in lost time from work. Assaults should be entered on the log. Doctor's reports of work injury and supervisors' reports must be kept of each recorded assault.
✓	**Incidents of Assaults** Describe who is assaulted, the type of activity (e.g., unprovoked sudden attack), and all other circumstances of the incident. The records should include a description of the location/environment, potential or actual costs, lost time, nature of injuries sustained, etc.
✓	**Incidents of Abuse, Verbal Attacks, or Aggressive Behavior** Any acts of aggression should be recorded, including threats to workers that do not result in injury (e.g., pushing or shouting). These records may be assault incident reports that are evaluated by the Threat Assessment Team.
✓	**Minutes of Safety Meetings and Inspection Reports** Keep track of minutes that contain findings, corrective actions recommended—relative to workplace violence—along with the company's response and completion dates for action items.
✓	**Training Records** They should include dates the training was conducted, type of training given, employees trained, etc.
✓	**Employee Questionnaires** Keep records of survey results that assess views of employees about high risk work areas and activities
✓	**Insurance Records**
✓	**Workers' Compensation Records**
✓	**Medical Records**

Source: OSHA, *Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, Part II: Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program*, http://www.osha.gov/workplace_violence/wrkplaceViolence.PartII.html.

11. Comprehensive Plans Should Include a Conflict Resolution Component

A truly comprehensive workplace violence program should also include an effective conflict resolution component. Conflict resolution methods such as mediation, facilitated negotiation and mutual problem solving should be used to relieve tensions among workers that arise from demands of the workplace.

Conflict resolution can be useful in building consensus among supervisors, employees, managers and union representatives. It can ease the transition from a crisis-prone to crisis-prepared workplace and will ensure that all efforts are directed toward making the prevention plan work.

Mediation: A Valuable Job Skill
The ability to recognize and resolve disputes is a valuable job skill. Mediation capabilities should be dispersed throughout an organization to maximize the possibility of an early response to a potential crisis.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control encourages its staff to take courses in dispute resolution, and the Polaroid Corporation's Grievance Assistance Office has trained dozens of employees to serve as in-house mediators of a wide range of disputes. And since the early 1990s a growing number of postal service districts have sponsored mediation training for their supervisors and union stewards.

Recurrent Training
Much like firefighters and emergency medical technicians, crisis response teams and mediators need to keep their skills updated through recurrent training. The goal of recurrent training should be fine-tuning a collaborative effort to reduce hostility, violence, harassment and threatening behavior on a continuing basis.

Source: Richard V. Denenberg and Mark Braverman, *The Violence Prone Workplace*, 1999.

Summary

1. By identifying the risk factors or underlying causes of workplace violence, we can anticipate problems and develop preventive strategies that will stop or at a minimum lower the risk of violence.

2. To be successful, a workplace violence prevention program must have commitment from top management and must involve supervisors, employees and union representatives.

3. A clearly written policy statement that conveys management's concern and commitment to employee safety and health is an important element of an effective workplace violence prevention program. The policy should be easily accessible to all employees and copies should be made available to employees upon request.

4. The initial step in developing a workplace violence prevention program is to designate a Threat Assessment Team that will be responsible for assessing the workplace's vulnerability to violence and reach agreement on the preventive actions to be taken.

5. The Threat Assessment Team can begin its work by reviewing previous incidents of violence. A review and analysis of existing records is necessary to develop a baseline and create an appropriate plan to correct the hazards. A questionnaire or survey should be distributed to employees to identify the potential for violent incidents and to identify or confirm the need for improved security measures. The team should also inspect the workplace as well as evaluate the work tasks of employees to determine the presence of hazards, conditions, operations and situations that might place workers at risk of occupational assault incidents.

6. The Threat Assessment Team should identify and institute a combination of physical environment control methods designed to eliminate or minimize the risks of assault incidents.

7. Regardless of their level of risk all employees should receive workplace violence training on company time. The training should use easily understandable terminology and it should be given in the language spoken by the employees. **Workers with job tasks or locations that place them at higher risk for violent incidents should be provided specialized training. Managers, supervisors and union representatives should get additional training that enables them to recognize a potentially hazardous situation and make the necessary changes in policy and procedures.**

8. A procedure for reporting workplace violence should be established. The procedure should be in writing, easily understood by all employees, and take into account issues of confidentiality. All incidents should be reported to the Threat Assessment Team. The reports and their evaluation will provide the basis for identifying program improvements.

9. After an incident or near miss occurs, a detailed investigation should be conducted as soon as possible. Procedures should be established for responding to the medical and psychological needs of employees after an assault incident. Affected employees should be provided with the appropriate medical and psychological treatment and follow-up.

10. A truly comprehensive workplace violence program should also include an effective conflict resolution component.