

## Workplace Violence

Workplace violence: unfortunately, high profile events continue to grab headlines. Just the thought of it can conjure up visions of images we've all seen on the television screen: images accompanied with sadness and thoughts of "how did it get to this?"

While most headlines recently are occurring outside the workplace, questions arise about if workplace violence can be prevented. In almost all cases that have been investigated, the answer is 'yes'. Here are some sobering statistics:

- An estimated 99.8% of all workplace violence victims survive the attack.
- Most workplace violence incidents do not involve physical contact.
- Estimated 98% of all workplace violence incidents can be prevented, provided someone recognizes AND addresses the precursors.

Workplace violence is defined as any act, verbal or physical, that threatens the safety of an employee, visitor, and/or customer; affects the health, life, or wellbeing of an employee, visitor, and/or customer; or results in damage to company, employee, visitor, or customer property. Workplace violence involves threats (verbal, written, physical, etc.), harassment, bullying and intimidation, brandishing weapons, sexual assaults, stalking, vandalism, graffiti, arson, aggressive behavior such as shoving, pushing, fist fights, and hostage-taking. And, workplace violence can be prevented: you just need to prepare for it and know the signs so correct action can be taken.

From a Cal/OSHA perspective, "Many workplaces are at risk for workplace violence, but certain workplaces are recognized to be at significantly greater risk than others. Therefore, every employer should perform an initial assessment to identify workplace security issues. There are a number of factors that have been shown to contribute to the risk of violence in the workplace. If you have one or more of the following factors at your workplace, then you should consider your workplace to be at potential risk of violence:

- Exchange of money.
- Working alone at night and during early morning hours.
- Availability of valued items, e.g., money and jewelry.
- Guarding money or valuable property or possessions.
- Performing public safety functions in the community.
- Working with patients, clients, customers or students known or suspected to have a history of violence.
- Workers with a history of assaults or who exhibit belligerent, intimidating and threatening behavior to others.

These are just some of the major factors that contribute to workplace violence. If you have identified any of these or other indicators of violence in the workplace, then further evaluation should be performed.”

If you find yourself in an active shooter event, here is what the FBI suggests:

- Run – have an escape route planned and leave your belongings behind; always keep your hands visible and call 911 when you are safe.
- Hide – in an area outside the shooter’s view; lock the door or block entry to your hiding place; be sure your phone (if you have it) is on vibrate.
- Fight – only as a last resort if your life is in imminent danger; try to incapacitate the shooter; commit to your actions.