

4 Types of Workplace Violence

Violence occurs frequently in workplaces across the U.S. and includes physical altercations, verbal threats, harassment and other disruptive behaviors. Beyond the initial safety concerns, workplace violence can negatively impact organizations in several ways. Employees involved in disputes may feel stressed and disengaged, affecting productivity and increasing absenteeism; repeated incidents may damage client trust; and incident response costs and workers' compensation claims can further strain company resources.

By understanding the common types of workplace violence, organizations can implement targeted risk mitigation measures to reduce the impact.



Type 1: **Criminal Intent**

The perpetrator has no prior connection to the business and commits a criminal act on company premises, typically for financial gain (e.g., robberies, break-ins). Incidents often involve weapons or forced entry.

Risk Mitigation Tips:

Organizations should conduct regular risk assessments to identify security gaps. They should also strengthen surveillance, lighting, access controls, and cash handling protocols to deter criminals.



Type 2: **Customer/Client**

The perpetrator is a customer, client or patient who acts violently or aggressively toward employees in service-based settings (e.g., healthcare, social services and customer-facing roles). Violence may be triggered by frustration, dissatisfaction or emotional distress.

Risk Mitigation Tips:

Organizations should train employees to promptly report verbal threats and other signs of aggression, and provide de-escalation training to help them manage difficult customers proactively.



Type 3: **Worker-on-Worker**

The perpetrator is a current or former employee who exhibits violent or aggressive behavior toward another employee, often as a result of escalating workplace tensions. Incidents may include physical altercations between workers or terminated employees threatening staff.

Risk Mitigation Tips:

Organizations should establish comprehensive workplace violence prevention policies that define expected conduct and train managers to identify early signs of workplace conflict.



Type 4: **Personal Relationship**

The perpetrator has no direct connection to the workplace but has a personal relationship with an employee (e.g., a family member) and external domestic violence or personal disputes spill into the workplace.

Risk Mitigation Tips:

Organizations should implement robust access control measures (e.g., ID badges and keycards) to prevent unauthorized individuals from entering the building and provide appropriate support for those experiencing domestic violence.