



Workplace Violence

Statistics all say that most deaths in the workplace occur due to violence. Not death from equipment or death from natural disaster, but from workplace violence. People, both employees and customers, expect a safe environment. Workplace violence can have many repercussions across the company and the marketplace.

Threats

Threats of violence in the workplace, can come in many forms. Bullying mailed threats and direct threats of violence are just a few of the ways that violence can be threatened by not only employees and customers, but from complete strangers to the company also.

Threats can be verbal, written, or stated. No threat should be ignored, no matter the circumstances. Employers are not required to tolerate such behavior and can be held liable if they ever do ignore a threat of violence. Reporting a threat of violence should always include information such as:

- Where, when, where, and how was the threat expressed?
- What was the wording the person used?
- Have there been any previous incidents involving the person?

Damage

Damage from a crisis, or event of workplace violence, is much greater than just the initial loss. Of course, you think of the physical damage of the event such as injury, damage to the property, and the damage to the day's profits. But there are other ways that damage can occur during an event such as this.



There is the damage to the company's reputation, in the form of being known as an unsafe business, being uncaring for the customers and employees, etc. We must also discuss the damage to the emotional state of the people that were present, which incurs more costs for counseling and loss of work of these employees.

Psychological Acts

What is a psychological act of violence? It is when one person uses hostile behavior against another person, to inflict emotional damage or undermine the other person. This could be in the form of attacking the other person's dignity or integrity, harassment, bullying, or putting the person's employment in jeopardy fraudulently.

Psychological acts like harassment, belittling, and bullying can cause both mental stress and anguish to the victim, and greatly affects his/her quality of life. These effects of these acts can range from anxiety, insomnia, and mood changes to social isolation, PTSD, and cardiac disorders.

Physical Acts

Physical acts of violence can be against an employee or against company property. The intensity can range from vandalism to assault to homicide. Some examples would be grabbing, hitting, pushing, and assault with a weapon, just to name a few different cases.

Physical acts can be against an inanimate object like stabbing a counter with a utility knife. It can be against a person, in the case of an altercation. Physical violence not only leaves a mark on the victim, but it also causes great stress on the staff. Physical acts of violence make others anxious, jumpy, and this affects the crew's productivity.



Case Study

Bob shows the crew a video on workplace violence. The video shows an unhappy employee slamming the door and breaking the window of the manager's office. The team in the video hears the employee state that he will be back to even the score, as he storms off the production floor.

After the video, Bob asks the team to identify the threats of the employee and how this is a psychological act of violence. Steph states that he said his threat to the team as he stormed off, and this could be an emotional stress on the team. Bob then asks the team if there are any physical acts that need to be addressed. Tom states that the damage to the door was a physical act of violence that should be disciplined.

Review Questions (Listen to Audio or Watch Video to find correct answers)

1. Threats of workplace violence can come from:
 - a. Employees
 - b. Strangers committing a crime
 - c. Customers
 - d. All of the above

2. Which threats are generally ignored?
 - a. Domestic abuse threats
 - b. Threats from customers
 - c. No threat should be ignored
 - d. All threats should be ignored



3. What is considered a crisis?
 - a. Security breach
 - b. Social media feedback
 - c. Harassing phone calls
 - d. Change in competition

4. It is suggested that every company have what in case of a crisis?
 - a. Emergency savings fund
 - b. Backup staff
 - c. Backup information system
 - d. Crisis communication plan

5. What is a psychological act of violence?
 - a. Stabbing a co-worker
 - b. Robbing the cash register
 - c. Vandalizing the building
 - d. Bullying

6. What are some of the effects of psychological acts like described in the previous question?
 - a. Anxiety
 - b. Profitability
 - c. Experience
 - d. Education