



SAFETY TOOLBOX TRAINING – THE CHANGING FACE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Use toolbox trainings to spark safety discussions during monthly meetings with employees*
- *Submit the employee sign-in sheet to your designated administrative assistant /training coordinator as a record of training*

Workplace Violence in the Headlines

The news headlines once read “Employee Killed During Convenience Store Robbery”; “Taxi Cab Driver Robbed and Murdered” However, more recent headlines have read “Student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University kills 32 Students and Teachers”; “Shooting at ABB Group in St. Louis leave four people dead”; “University of Alabama-Huntsville Biology Professor Accused of Killing Three Colleagues”; Shooting at Ohio State University Maintenance Building Leaves One Employee Dead and Two Others Injured; John Hopkins Hospital Shooter Injures Physician”. Although these large-scale incidents garner big headlines, less dramatic, yet highly dangerous incidents play out in workplaces every day. This ever changing face of workplace violence makes it an important topic that needs to be addressed.



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What is Workplace Violence?



Workplace violence is defined as any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the workplace. Unfortunately, workplace violence is a common problem in the United States. The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) reported 11,613 workplace homicide victims between 1992 and 2006. Averaging just under 800 homicides per year, the largest number of homicides in one year was 1080 in 1994; the lowest number was 540 in 2006. Beyond this grim statistic, it is estimated that approximately two million Americans are the victims of workplace violence each year that does not escalate to a killing.

Why Do People Resort to Violence?

A variety of factors contribute to workplace violence, but stress is chief among them. Some of this is work-related – fatigue and frustration from pressure to get the job done, sometimes without days off, and with exceedingly long hours. Other factors may include, reprimands in front of other employees, inconsistent discipline, employee favoritism, downsizing, and reorganization. Non-work stress factors can be just as significant – medical problems, financial difficulties, relationship issues and family matters. Not knowing how to manage these issues, supervisors and employees bring the stress to work and take it out on subordinates or co-workers. All of these factors can be aggravated by the larger economic crisis.

Recognizing the Early Signs of Potential Violence



Although you may think it will never happen at Emory and, hopefully, it never will, it is important that employees are aware of the warning signs of workplace violence. When an employee is angry with an organization, organizational policies, or coworkers, it is important for the issue to be taken seriously before the issue escalates into aggression or violence. Employees must take all threats seriously and report any bizarre or suspicious behavior to their supervisor or

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department head. Workplace aggressors and those who are likely to commit an act of violence are more than likely to verbalize their frustrations, so personnel should be aware of the common warning signs listed below:

- Person has a history of violent behavior;
- Person has an obsession with weapons;
- Person has made previous verbal threats of harm;
- Person exhibits signs of paranoia and has been described as being a loner;
- Person makes bizarre comments or expresses extreme desperation over recent family, financial or personal problems;
- Person has outbursts of anger;
- Person makes suicidal comments or threats.

Emory's Workplace Violence Policy

Like most institutions, Emory has a zero tolerance policy for violence in the workplace. The University will not tolerate threats of violence, acts of violence, harassment, intimidation and any other form of disruptive behavior.

- All acts of workplace violence should be reported immediately to your supervisor or department head and the Emory Police Department at 404-727-6111 (or 911).
- You also should report any threats, harassment, or acts of intimidation to your supervisor or department head.
- The supervisor will then determine if Human Resources and/or the Emory Police Department should be notified.



More information on this policy can be found at <http://policies.emory.edu/4.108>.

Additional Resources

The Faculty Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) is focused on working with employees to maintain or regain productivity, peace of mind, and well-being. The FSAP also offers assistance with diffusing workplace anger and violence. The elements of the program are:

- **Diagnosis.** An employee of an organization asks for assistance and the FSAP staff attempt to diagnose the problem.
- **Treatment.** Counseling or therapy is provided. If the FSAP is unable to assist the employee, the employee may be referred to the appropriate professional outside of the organization.
- **Screening.** Periodic screening and examinations of employees, especially of those in highly stressful positions, to detect warning signs of violence or aggression.
- **Prevention.** Employers use education and persuasion to communicate to employees with high risk levels that there must be alternative solutions to dealing and coping with stress.

REMEMBER: HINDSIGHT EXPLAINS THE INJURY THAT FORESIGHT WOULD HAVE PREVENTED

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. True or False. Workplace violence can be acts of violence, threats of violence, or harassment in the workplace.

Answer: True. In general, workplace violence is defined as any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the workplace. Emory also includes harassment in the Workplace Violence Policy.

2. True or False. A person who constantly talks about his/her guns and has outbursts of anger on the job is exhibiting signs of potential violence.

Answer: True. Early signs of potential violence include the following:

- Person has a history of violent behavior;
- Person has an obsession with weapons;
- Person has made previous verbal threats of harm;
- Person exhibits signs of paranoia and has been described as being a loner;
- Person makes bizarre comments or expresses extreme desperation over recent family, financial or personal problems;
- Person has outbursts of anger; or
- Person makes suicidal comments or threats.

3. Whom should you contact if a fellow employee is harassing you?
 - a. EHSO
 - b. A supervisor or director
 - c. Your spouse

Answer: b - your supervisor or director

4. True or False. The Faculty Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) offers assistance with diffusing workplace anger and violence.

Answer: True. FSAP can help with personal and workplace issues.

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