

# Safety Bugle

## Today's Topic: Workplace Violence



### What is workplace violence?

Workplace violence can happen anywhere, any time, it can occur at or outside the workplace. It can come from a co-worker or a stranger. And it isn't limited to physical assault. Workplace violence is any form of threatening or disruptive behavior. It can be as simple as a gesture, such as a raised fist, or as complicated as sabotage and homicide. However it manifests itself, workplace violence is a growing concern for employers and employees nationwide.

### Who is vulnerable?

Every year about two million workers in the US experience workplace violence. Workplace violence can strike anywhere, and no one is immune.

### Example

A Kentucky plastics factory employee, who was known to not get along with his co-workers, fatally shot his supervisor and four other workers before taking his own life.

The press operator, said to be 25 years old, argued with his supervisor about wearing protective eyewear and using a cell phone at his workstation, before being escorted from the factory. He then returned and fatally shot his supervisor before shooting several other workers, apparently at random.

### How to Protect Yourself

Before people explode in violence at work, they may give signals that something is wrong. There are a number of warning signs to let you know that trouble is brewing. Here are a few:

- Social isolation.
- Decrease in personal hygiene.
- Complaints of unfair treatment.
- Excessive lateness or absenteeism.
- Faulty decision-making.
- Blaming others for mistakes.
- Inappropriate comments. About revenge, violence or weapons.
- Disrespect for authority.
- Swearing.
- Overreacting to criticism.

There are precautions workers can take to minimize or prevent violence on the job. For example:

- Don't get drawn into arguments. Loud and aggressive arguments can easily escalate into physical fights.
- Take verbal threats seriously, but don't respond to them.
- Report all threats to your supervisor.
- Report all incidents of bullying and sexual harassment.
- Watch for unauthorized visitors, even those who appear to have legitimate business at your facility. Crimes have been committed by people posing as employees, contractors and repair persons.
- Report any suspicious person or vehicle.
- Don't give out information about fellow employees.
- Keep doors locked before your business officially opens and after closing time.
- Always have access to communication devices so you can notify someone for help.
- Devise a plan such that predetermined code words can be used so one employee can tell another about a dangerous individual without tipping off the suspect.
- Trust your instincts. They act as your early warning system.



### How can you get more information?

OSHA has various publications, standards, technical assistance, and compliance tools to help you, and offers extensive assistance through its many safety and health programs. This and other information are available on OSHA's website at [www.OSHA.gov](http://www.OSHA.gov).

### Final Thought

*Knowing what workplace violence is, what you can do about it, and what your company's policy is on the topic will go a long way to ensuring your safety and to curbing violence in your workplace.*