

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE... **FOR CALIFORNIA MANAGERS** **AND SUPERVISORS**

COURSE OUTLINE

- **When it comes to violence, the media always latches onto the headline-makers, like "murder".**
 - But other types of workplace violence occur far more frequently.
- **Before we go any further, we need to define the word "violence".**
 - The first thing that comes to mind is a physical confrontation.
- **But violence also includes verbal and emotional attacks.**
 - The psychological harm caused by threats, intimidation and verbal abuse can be as serious as any physical injury.
- **There are several sources of violence in the workplace.**
 - One is "outside threats".
- **These are people who aren't employees that commit acts of violence in your workplace.**
 - Customers or vendors may seek revenge for some perceived wrongdoing.
 - Terrorists can even target your business to "set an example".
 - In healthcare environments, patients or their families can sometimes become hostile, and assault medical personnel.
- **And unfortunately, the workplace isn't immune to incidents of "domestic violence", either.**
- **Another type of outside threat is "commercial crime".**
 - A robber enters a business looking for some "quick cash".
 - People can get hurt, even killed, if things don't go as planned.
- **The workers at greatest risk from commercial crime...**
 - Exchange money with the public.
 - Work alone or in small numbers.
 - Work late night or early morning hours.

- **Another source of workplace violence is "inside threats".**
 - All organizations are at risk from aggressive or violent people who are working in their facilities.
 - And we're not just talking about disgruntled employees who take out their frustrations on you or other supervisors.
- **Disagreements or personality conflicts between coworkers are the most common causes of workplace violence.**
 - That's why it's your responsibility as a leader to help keep your workplace as safe and non-violent as possible.
 - Fortunately, violence rarely happens without warning.
- **You can't predict when and where workplace violence will strike.**
 - But there are usually "warning signs", or "red flags" that tell you when violence might occur.
- **In fact, California's "Workplace Violence Bill" requires employers to have a system in place for identifying and evaluating these "hazards".**
 - That is, situations and conditions that could lead to workplace violence.
- **The "Bill" also requires that your company has a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan and provides a sample Plan to help you with this. It includes a section on "Workplace Violence Hazard Correction" that asks you to describe...**
 - When "violence hazard" inspections will be conducted.
 - How concerns about potential hazards will be evaluated.
 - What to do if there is a hazardous condition that can't be fixed immediately.
 - The corrective actions that will be taken, and by who, to resolve hazards.
 - Corrective measures for hazards that are specific to a given work area.
- **You need to make sure you address each of these procedures in your Plan as well as involve your employees in its development.**
 - So you may want to hold a meeting to get ideas and feedback from the people that you supervise as you draft your written Plan.
 - Once you have your Plan put together, it must be made available to employees as well.

- **There are many types of “warning signs” of potential violence that you and your employees can work together to identify.**
 - For instance, someone may suddenly become irritable and prone to emotional outbursts or mood swings.
 - Or they may get defensive and overreact to comments or criticism.
- **An employee may also start complaining frequently or blame others for their problems.**
 - They may talk about "getting back" at a coworker or be fascinated by other incidents of violence.
 - These can be warning signs as well.
- **Other "red flags" include being late or absent more often than usual or disappearing during the workday.**
 - These can be indications that someone may be having trouble coping with their problems and be emotionally “on edge”.
- **Or you may notice an employee becoming careless, reckless or having accidents on the job because they are frustrated or distracted.**
 - Which are possible warning signs of the potential for violence.
- **But remember, these types of warning signs don't always indicate future violence.**
 - Everyone has "bad days" or may blow off a little steam now and then.
 - What you really need to watch for is when an employee starts to exhibit aggressive or violent behavior.
- **"Aggressive behavior" is any attempt to hurt or demean someone.**
 - This doesn't just mean causing physical harm.
 - It includes threats, sexual harassment and verbal abuse.
- **There are basically three types of threats...**
 - Veiled.
 - Conditional.
 - Direct.
- **"Veiled", or "hidden", threats suggest that a person intends to do harm without them actually spelling out what they plan to do.**

- **"Conditional threats" are used to intimidate people.**
 - The goal is to make someone do something or to prevent them from doing it.
- **"Direct threats" come through loud and clear.**
 - This is when a person declares their intention to commit an act of violence.
- **"Sexual harassment" is also a form of aggressive behavior.**
 - And women aren't the only victims.
 - It's defined as repeated, unwanted behavior based on an individual's sex or sexual identity, whether they are male or female.
- **It includes...**
 - "Sexist" as well as sexual remarks.
 - Any unwanted physical contact.
 - Sexual advances.
 - Hazing or practical jokes based on an individual's sex or sexual orientation.
 - Or assigning someone menial or demeaning tasks because of their gender.
- **And while sexual harassment between coworkers is a significant problem, it can be even more common coming from a supervisor or manager.**
 - As someone in a leadership position, you have power over your employees.
 - So be careful that your actions aren't liable to be misinterpreted.
- **"Verbal abuse" is yet another type of aggressive behavior, and can include...**
 - Bullying.
 - Mocking.
 - Intimidation.
 - Insults.
- **This shouldn't be dismissed as someone "just being mean".**
 - There is no excuse for an employee using language or behavior to hurt someone's feelings.

- **It's important that any type of aggressive behavior be nipped in the bud.**
 - But some people don't want to get anyone "in trouble" by reporting these kinds of incidents.
 - They don't want to be seen as a "tattletale" or would like to think that the problem will just go away on its own.
- **That's why California's Workplace Violence Prevention Bill requires you to have a written procedure for employees to report instances of aggression as well as violence.**
- **It's up to you to...**
 - Make it clear to your employees that reporting aggressive behavior is in everyone's best interest.
 - Always take these reports seriously yourself.
- **The Bill also requires you to designate...**
 - Who will act as the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan "Administrator".
 - The format that you want to be used for written reports.
 - What other ways there are for employees to report aggressive or violent incidents.
- **Local law enforcement agencies should always be notified of incidents involving threats of violence or physical assaults.**
 - You must make sure that you record any incidents that occur in your workplace too.
 - Even if the police file a separate report, you need one of your own using the company's "Violent Incident Log".
- **Your employees should also know how to report any weapons that they see in your workplace.**
 - Even a licensed, authorized weapon can be very dangerous.
 - If they see one, there should be a clear procedure they can follow to report it without fear of retaliation.
- **And both you and your employees should also take note of any unauthorized people that you see.**
 - If it turns out that they have been approved to be there, there is no harm done.
 - But it's better to be safe than sorry!

- **Any involvement with violence has serious consequences. Take fighting.**
 - By definition, an “assault” can be an attempt to cause physical injury... or a physical threat to do bodily harm.
 - Even an unwilling participant could get injured, suspended or fired... possibly even sued by the assailant, or arrested.
- **So if you notice a couple of employees are having an argument, attempt to resolve it peacefully.**
 - Offer a compromise and hear them both out.
 - And never get caught up in a shouting match yourself.
- **If an employee or intruder confronts you...**
 - Remain calm.
 - Keep your arms low... in a non-threatening position.
 - Try to stay at least five feet away from them and avoid physical contact.
 - Maintain a soothing tone of voice.
 - Let them know that you understand their concerns... don’t judge, argue or disagree.
 - If they become violent, try to get away... or call out.
- **If someone challenges you to a fight, turn them down.**
 - Fighting always causes more problems than it solves.
 - The best response is to just walk away.
 - Don’t fight back unless your life is in danger.
- **But when a violent incident does occur, you need to keep a record of it.**
 - Since physical assault is a crime, local law enforcement should also be informed.
- **Unfortunately now-a-days “active shooter” situations occur almost daily and can happen in any type of work environment.**
 - Whether it’s a personal dispute, a robbery or something else, any situation that involves a weapon is extremely dangerous and requires special considerations.

Never confront an armed assailant if you can avoid it.

- The best plan is to get as far away as possible.
- Stay low and out of sight.
- Help others to get to safety if you can.

- **In general, don't sound alarms if it will put anyone in danger.**
 - Contact security or law enforcement personnel only when you can do so safely.
- **If you come face-to-face with an armed assailant, remember “The person with the gun is in charge”.**
 - Follow their instructions to the letter.
 - Repeat their commands as you do as they ask.
 - Don't make any sudden moves, and keep your hands visible at all times.
- **Never resist an armed assailant unless you feel they are going to kill you.**
 - This is the only time it's worth risking your life to fight back.
- **These types of situations are also why you need to include emergency response procedures in your company's Workplace Violence Prevention Plan.**
- **Cal OSHA's sample Plan asks employers to describe....**
 - How you will alert employees of an emergency.
 - What your “shelter” and evacuation plans are.
 - How you will obtain help from staff, security, or law enforcement.
- **The Plan also has a section dedicated to post-incident response and investigation.**
 - This way, if a violent emergency occurs, you have clear steps to follow.
 - Your employees will also know what to expect.
- **Knowing how to recognize the warning signs of potential violence as well as how to handle violent behavior are important.**
 - But to be as effective as possible in helping everyone deal with workplace violence, you and your company need to be even more proactive in their efforts.
- **In 2016 OSHA published a set of guidelines that address the workplace violence issue for healthcare and social service workers.**
 - These guidelines focused mainly on facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes.
 - But with the introduction of California's Senate Bill 553, there are now clear guidelines and requirements for other work environments as well.

- **Both OSHA’s guidelines and California’s Bill require companies to create and implement a written Workplace Violence Prevention Plan.**
 - The Plan is built around several core elements.
- **The first is “management leadership and employee participation”.**
 - Everyone in your workplace needs to get behind the plan and work together to help it succeed.
 - So there should be clear procedures written to make sure employees can participate in the development and implementation of the Plan.
- **There should also be defined roles and responsibilities in the Plan.**
 - For instance, every company needs a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan Administrator.
 - If you don’t take on this role yourself, make sure you know who it is and that they have the proper training to receive and handle reports of potential violence “hazards”, or incidents of violence themselves.
- **Hazard identification and assessment is the second element and is critically important.**
 - The potential conditions or situations that could give rise to violence have to be identified in order to develop solutions to address them.
- **The next element is “hazard prevention and control”.**
 - Once potential “trouble spots” have been identified, you must implement appropriate measures to control or eliminate them.
 - When you cannot prevent or control hazards, you must have a plan for emergency responses and post-incident investigation.
- **“Education and training” are both extremely important as well. All employees need to know...**
 - What types of conditions and situations are most likely to lead to workplace violence.
 - What they can do to help guard against it.
 - What to do if it occurs.
- **To comply with California’s “Workplace Violence Prevention Bill”, you must provide annual training to keep your employees aware of your workplace violence prevention procedures.**
 - Don’t forget... all employees must have access to a written copy of your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan as well.

- **Recordkeeping and evaluation are the final elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan. The Plan should be monitored on an ongoing basis to...**
 - Assess its effectiveness.
 - Identify any new problems that may have developed.
 - Implement improved solutions where needed.
- **And you need to keep records of all workplace violence prevention training as well as workplace violence incidents.**
 - California is requiring all companies to keep “Violent Incident Logs” on file for at least five years, and training records on file for a minimum of one year.
- **Cal OSHA’s sample Workplace Violence Prevention Plan can also help you create a Plan that is unique to your environment.**
- **Your and your employees’ knowledge is key to identifying situations and conditions in your workplace that could give rise to violence and developing ways to address them.**
 - While it’s your responsibility to lead this effort, make sure your employees feel comfortable making contributions both in the initial stages of creating the Plan and on an ongoing basis.
- **If changes in your workplace create additional sources of potential violence you need to...**
 - Share this information with your employees.
 - Discuss it with others who are involved in implementing your Workplace Violence Prevention Plan.

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- **Watch for the warning signs of violence, such as mood swings, defensiveness and acting recklessly.**
- **Establish easy ways for employees to report instances of intimidation and sexual or verbal harassment, as well as other forms of aggressive and violent behavior.**
- **Try to resolve all conflicts peacefully. Remind employees that fighting causes more problems than it solves.**
- **If you're confronted with violence yourself, escape from your attacker if you can, or try to get help.**
- **If you are attacked, never "fight back"... unless you feel that your life is in danger.**
- **And make sure your company has a thorough, written Workplace Violence Prevention Plan that complies with California's "Workplace Violence Prevention Bill".**