

# VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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## WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Workplace violence is a problem facing every sector of business today. Each event can cause major damage to organizations with the direct costs of operational interruption, property damage, physical and psychological injury and in many cases loss of life. OSHA defines workplace violence as the following.

“**Workplace violence** is any act or threat of physical **violence**, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site. It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide. It can affect and involve employees, clients, customers and visitors.”

There are currently no specific OSHA standards for workplace violence. However, under the General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are required to provide their employees with a place of employment that is “free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.”

## TYPES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

According to the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), workplace violence can be broken into 4 major types. Reviewing each of the following types of workplace violence will help you to better understand your exposures and prepare your workplace:

**Type 1:** Criminal Intent – Violent acts by people who do not have a connection to the workplace who solely intend to commit robbery, assault any another crime.

**Type 2:** Customer/Client/Patient – Any violence directed to your employees by a vendor, customer, client, patient or any other third party to which you provide a service to.

**Type 3:** Co-worker – Any violence in the workplace by a current or former employee against coworkers, supervisors or manager.

**Type 4:** Personal – Any violence in the workplace by an individual who does not work there, who has a personal relationship with an employee.

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROGRAM AND PREVENTION

Here are best practices to assist you mitigating violence in the workplace:

1. Program elements should include but not be limited to:
  - Comprehensive Workplace Violence Program including Anti Harrassment/Discrimination policies
  - Written Security Procedures/Program
  - Written Emergency Preparedness Program
2. Physical Controls
  - Lighting – interior and exterior
  - Building access – key card/fobs, security ballasts
  - Security Hardware such as cameras, panic buttons
  - Limiting access to isolated areas of building
  - Limiting cash on site – drop box, credit card or check only
3. Administrative Controls
  - Security Personnel
  - Visitor Controls – Sign in, ID verification
  - Adequate Staffing – elimination of wait times
  - Local police dept. coordination
  - Working Alone
  - Training – Employees and management
    - Conflict Resolution
    - De-escalation techniques
    - How to handle allegations of harassment and discrimination
    - [Warning Signs](#)
    - Situational Awareness

### 4. Emergency Preparedness Program

- Active threat/shooter procedures – Run Hide Fight
- Train employees on situational awareness – see something/say something
- Coordinate tabletop drills with local Police department with the Crisis Management team
- Conduct regular evacuation drills to help employees familiarize themselves with all exits

The following references provide additional information on risk factors and scope of violence in the workplace to increase awareness of workplace violence:

### CANADIAN RESOURCES

<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/workplaceviolence.php>

<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/violence.html>

### US RESOURCES

- [Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries \(CFOI\) – Current and Revised Data](#). U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Includes the category “Assaults and Violent Acts”.
- [Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies and Research Needs](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication No. 2006-144, (September 2006). *Summarizes discussions that took place during Partnering in Workplace Violence Prevention: Translating Research to Practice*, a landmark conference held in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 15-17, 2004.
- [Violence in the Workplace – Preventing It; Managing It](#). Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- [Violence on the Job](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication No. 2004-100d, (2004). Provides streaming video resources that discusses practical measures for identifying risk factors for violence at work, and taking strategic action to keep employees safe. Based on extensive NIOSH research, supplemented with information from other authoritative sources. Transcript also [available](#).
- [Violence Occupational Hazards in Hospitals](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication No. 2002-101, (April 2002). Increases employee and employer awareness of the risk factors for violence in hospitals and provides strategies for reducing exposure to these factors.

## PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The following references provide guidance for evaluating and controlling violence in the workplace.

### OSHA GUIDANCE

- [Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers](#).
- [Taxi Drivers – How to Prevent Robbery and Violence](#). OSHA Publication 3976 (DHHS/NIOSH Publication No. 2020-100), (October 2019).
- [Recommendations for Workplace Violence Prevention Programs in Late-Night Retail Establishments](#). OSHA Publication 3153, (2009).
- [Workplace Violence](#). OSHA Fact Sheet, (2002). Also available in [Spanish](#). Provides basic information about vulnerable occupations, employer/employee roles in prevention and protection, and recommendations for response to violent incidents.
- [Young Worker Safety in Restaurants](#). OSHA eTool. Provides young employees and their employers safety solutions for workplace violence in specific areas of a restaurant.
  - [Drive-thru](#)
  - [Serving](#)

## OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY GUIDANCE

- [Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies and Research Needs](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication No. 2006-144, (September 2006).
- [Violence on the Job](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication No. 2004-100d, (2004). Provides streaming video resources that discusses practical measures for identifying risk factors for violence at work, and taking strategic action to keep employees safe. Based on extensive NIOSH research, supplemented with information from other authoritative sources. Transcript also [available](#).
- [Occupational Violence](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Workplace Safety and Health Topic. Provides basic information on workplace violence including risk factors and prevention strategies.
- [Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners \(PDF\)](#). U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Assists those who are responsible for establishing workplace violence initiatives at their agencies. This handbook is the result of a cooperative effort of many federal agencies sharing their expertise in preventing and dealing with workplace violence.

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