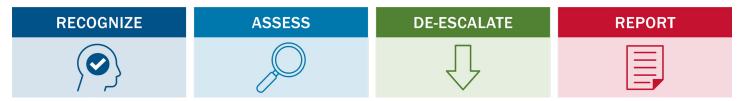# DE-ESCALATION ACTION GUIDE

Critical infrastructure and public gathering locations face a dynamic threat environment, which requires the implementation of various types of security measures to mitigate the threat of violence. Organizations can augment existing security protocols by training personnel to identify a potentially violent situation and to take quick actions to de-escalate the incident. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) offers a suite of resources to assist organizations by empowering security and non-security staff with these critical skills.

This Action Guide provides an overview of the primary steps that may be taken to de-escalate a potentially violent situation and consolidates the CISA De-escalation Series[1] into this single, easy-to-use resource.

> *"'De-escalation' is the use of communication or other techniques during an encounter to stabilize, slow, or reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation without using physical force or with a reduction in force."*[2]

CISA identifies four categories of activities for effective de-escalation:

RECOGNIZE	ASSESS	DE-ESCALATE	REPORT

RECOGNIZE

Recognizing the warning signs and behavioral indicators of someone on a pathway to violence is key to violence prevention. Individuals who are planning acts of targeted violence often display threatening or concerning behaviors over time that are observable to those closest to them. In situations where an individual's baseline behavior is unknown, decisions should be made based on how the individual is behaving and knowledge of what would be typical behavior for that situation.[3]

> *If a **hostile act** is imminent or occurring, remove yourself from the situation and seek safety, if possible. Report the hostile act to law enforcement as soon as it is safe to do so.*

In situations where concerning behavior or activities have been identified, individuals should:

- Rely on observable behavioral indicators of aggression.
- Make informed decisions based on knowledge of what is considered typical behavior in that situation, context, or location.
- Inform others of what has been observed or is known.
- Notify a supervisor, security staff, or law enforcement in accordance with your organization's security policies and procedures.

Note ─────────

1   *CISA, De-escalation Series,* cisa.gov/de-escalation-series

2   *Department of Homeland Security Policy Statement 044-05,* dhs.gov/publication/law-enforcement *| Homeland Security*

3   *This guidance describes activities and behaviors that may be concerning or indicative of impending violence but are also constitutionally protected. Only report when there are sufficient facts to support a rational conclusion that the behavior or activity represents a potential threat of violence and not based solely on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or a combination of only such factors. The approaches, techniques, and tactics described in this guidance are options for consideration. They are not intended to mandate policy or direct any action. CISA accepts no liability for the failure of this guidance to prevent violent incidents.*

🔍 ASSESS

Assessing concerning behavior or suspicious activity is a continuous process and requires the person assessing the situation to determine if immediate emergency response is required, if de-escalation is possible, or if a more formal assessment is required.

When **assessing the situation, individuals should:**

- Identify what concerning behaviors or activities were observed.
- Determine if a threat is present.
- Assess how the person of concern will respond or react when approached.

⬇ DE-ESCALATE

De-escalating a situation involves taking purposeful actions to calm a volatile situation and should be attempted by trained and proficient personnel, if safe to do so.

When attempting to defuse a potentially violent situation without using physical force, individuals should:

ACT WITH PURPOSE	COMMUNICATE WITH EMPATHY	MONITOR BODY LANGUAGE
Remain calm	Monitor tone and volume	Maintain a relaxed and alert stance
Change the setting (if appropriate)	Choose your words with care	Keep hands down, open, and visible
Respect personal space	Adjust rate of speech	Use slow and deliberate movements
Engage in active listening	Adjust inflection	Maintain a neutral and attentive facial expression

ⓘ Remember: ⓘ

- Your safety and the safety of others is the highest priority.
- Know your limits and obtain assistance if needed.

📋 REPORT

Reporting is critical to preventing workplace and community violence. When sharing information through your organization or community's reporting mechanisms, be sure to provide the facts of what was observed or heard and avoid conjecture.

Effective and timely reporting may provide key pieces of information needed to get an individual of concern help before an incident occurs and can be useful for threat assessment and management teams.

If violence appears imminent, **immediately contact 9-1-1**. If there is no immediate threat to safety, follow organizational or community reporting mechanisms.

When reporting, individuals should:

- Relay the exact nature and context of the observed concerning behaviors, comments, and/or threats.
- Identify the individual who made the threat (if known).
- Specify any argumentative or confrontational actions or attempts to avoid security taken by the individual.
- Share any grievances the individual may have (if known).

For more information on de-escalation: cisa.gov/de-escalation-series
Additional conflict prevention resources: cisa.gov/conflict-prevention