

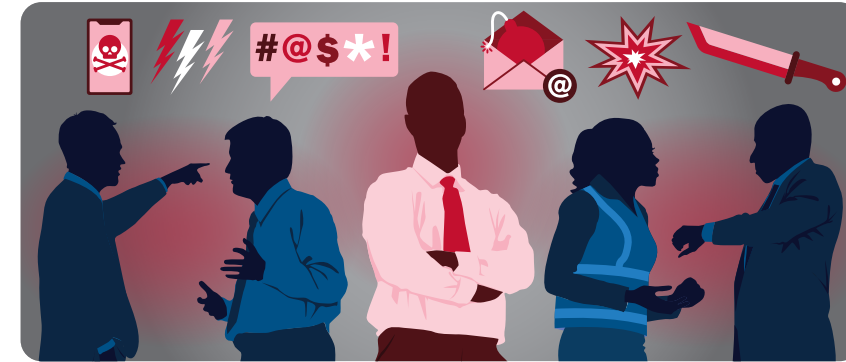
# PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE: Security Awareness Considerations



**CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORKERS ARE AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE UNITED STATES LABOR FORCE**, with each worker actively supporting the continued success of their respective sector, industry, and community. A single workplace violence incident can have sweeping repercussions, including: immediate and profound loss of life; physical or psychological repercussions to the victim(s), their families or co-workers; the loss of productivity and morale following a violent incident and the public relations impact on an employer when news of violence reaches the media.<sup>1</sup>

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) assists critical infrastructure leaders, human resource personnel, managers and workers to prevent and mitigate workplace violence by cultivating a culture of awareness and support within their unique working environment.

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:



**Any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, sexual harassment, intimidation, bullying, offensive jokes or other threatening disruptive behavior** that occurs at the work or organizational site. It ranges from threats, verbal abuse, physical assault and even homicide.<sup>2</sup>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that violence in the workplace contributes to fatal occupational injuries, with approximately **450 workplace homicides** and **275 suicides** each year.<sup>3</sup>



Each year organizations across the country experience violent incidents that profoundly impact employee safety, morale and trust, sometimes resulting in **severe injury or even death**.

Approximately **2 million people report workplace violence every year** and authorities estimate an additional **25 percent of incidents go unreported**.<sup>4</sup>

Aside from the social and psychological effects of workplace violence, these incidents can also have an **extremely detrimental financial impact to organizations and individuals**. For instance, in 2019, workplace violence events resulted in **18,370 assaults—including 458 homicides** - which led to an **estimated financial impact of \$130 billion**.<sup>5</sup>



## CATEGORIES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE RELATIONSHIPS:<sup>6</sup>



### Personal Relationships

In this type of violence, **the perpetrator does not have a relationship with the business but has a personal relationship with the intended victim**. It might be a family member, spouse or significant other, for example. Typically, the violence is intended for the employee with whom there is a relationship, but that doesn't mean it will be contained there. This can also include domestic violence cases that spill over into the workplace.

### Customer/Client

This type of workplace violence involves a **legitimate relationship between the perpetrator and the business or its employee(s)**. He or she might be a customer, a vendor or a student, for example. This category of workplace violence is the most common.

### Criminal Intent

This type of workplace violence involves **no relationship between the perpetrator, business or its employee(s)**. The incident is related to another crime such as robbery or trespassing.

### Worker-on-Worker

This type of workplace violence involves a **current or former employee of the business who attacks or threatens other employee(s) or former employee(s) in the workplace**.

1. U.S. Department of Labor. n.d. "DOL Workplace Violence Program." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration & Management. Accessed March 27, 2023. [dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/human-resources-center/policies/workplace-violence-program](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/human-resources-center/policies/workplace-violence-program)  
2. U.S. Department of Labor. n.d. "Workplace Violence." Occupational Safety & Health Administration. Accessed May 2, 2023. [osha.gov/workplace-violence#:~:text=Workplace%20violence%20is%20any%20act,physical%20assaults%20and%20even%20homicide](https://www.osha.gov/workplace-violence#:~:text=Workplace%20violence%20is%20any%20act,physical%20assaults%20and%20even%20homicide)  
3. U.S. Department of Labor. 2022. Bureau of Labor Statistics. National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2021. Accessed May 16, 2023. [www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf)  
4. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 2020. Insider Threat Mitigation Guide. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, 48. [cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/Insider%20Threat%20Mitigation%20Guide\\_Final\\_508.pdf](https://cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/Insider%20Threat%20Mitigation%20Guide_Final_508.pdf)  
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6. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 2022. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Active Shooter Preparedness Webinar Training. Accessed May 2, 2023. [cisa.gov/resources-tools/training/active-shooter-preparedness-webinar](https://cisa.gov/resources-tools/training/active-shooter-preparedness-webinar)



# PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:

## Security Awareness Considerations



## CARE Cultivate Sense of Community, Advocate for Employees, Research and Plan Ahead, Enforce and Follow Through

**CONSIDERATIONS:** To counteract worker-on-worker based violence in the workplace, CISA encourages all critical infrastructure leaders, human resource personnel, managers and workers to consider the following guidelines, known as **CARE**: Cultivate Sense of Community, Advocate for Employees, Research and Plan Ahead and Enforce and Follow Through. While there is no one-size-fits-all plan for preventing workplace violence, these guidelines can be tailored to fit any workplace structure or leadership style in the critical infrastructure community.

### CULTIVATE SENSE OF COMMUNITY



**Encourage mindfulness by focusing on the workplace as a community environment.** Foster a professional, healthy and empathetic work environment that addresses workplace stressors such as isolation, resentment and hostility among employees before those stressors become larger issues.



**Encourage a workplace culture that is acceptive of all cultures, religions, sex, race, etc.** This can be developed and maintained through regular awareness seminars, training and education.



**Establish a clear zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence and create purposeful workplace safety standards of behavior based on input and collaboration between employees and leadership.** This policy should apply to all employees and non-employee vendors or contract staff.



**Encourage a culture of awareness, attentiveness and reporting that eliminates the fear of retaliation.** Employees can likely tell when a teammate is acting abnormal or showing worrying behavior; their insight is invaluable. Make it clear that the organization's end goals are to support employee needs and to foster employee belonging and safety, not to terminate individuals.

### ADVOCATE FOR EMPLOYEES



**Promote open, sincere and timely communication** among managers and employees.



**Strongly encourage employee feedback and develop a policy that includes procedures for employees to report incidents.** Maintain a non-judgmental forum for complaints and concerns that includes timely feedback to the initiator without repercussion.



**Develop a continuous peer review system for employees** as a method of gauging the social, ethical and communal environment for red flags or personnel stability concerns.



**Provide staff with various professional development opportunities and mental health assistance to encourage those experiencing difficulty to seek support without ramifications.** Ensure employees are aware and have a clear understanding of how to access the resources and employee assistance programs available to them through routine communication.

### RESEARCH AND PLAN AHEAD



**Develop standard operating procedures for the personnel responsible for intaking information, assessing and acting on reported incidents.**

Develop mandatory protocols to ensure the safest termination possible to lessen a potential future threat.



**Review and evaluate threat assessments and any previous workplace violence experiences** to identify vulnerabilities and develop prevention and mitigation measures and response plans.



**Provide regular training opportunities for employees.** This should include but is not limited to identifying worrying behavior, appropriate reporting measures, de-escalation and emergency response protocols.



**Form a designated internal community awareness group to regularly evaluate the organization's current ability to handle violent incidents** and recommend ways to strengthen response capabilities. Establish roles and responsibilities among group members and define a clear and routine schedule for group meetings.

### ENFORCE AND FOLLOW THROUGH



**Hold leadership accountable.** Preventing workplace violence greatly depends on awareness, accountability and program advocacy from senior leadership.



**Maintain impartial and consistent mediation for employees who exhibit improper conduct or poor performance.** Disciplinary actions should be fair and designed to help employees improve their performance while providing the necessary support to get them back on track. This support should include check-in measures following write-ups, etc., to address lingering concerns in an empathic manner.



**Intervene early in a threatening or potentially violent situation** to prevent its escalation. Early intervention may defuse the initial situation and give the supervisor an opportunity to thoroughly review options for resolution.



**Develop an immediate "leave of absence" mechanism for employees related to safety issues.** Unlike termination or probation, this mechanism would place employees on sabbatical pending further investigation or action.



**If you have concerns about a potential immediate threat of violence in your workplace, contact your local law enforcement.**

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



- **Bombing Prevention:** [cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/bombing-prevention](https://cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/bombing-prevention)
- **CISA De-escalation Series:** [cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/de-escalation-series](https://cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/de-escalation-series)
- **DHS "If You See Something, Say Something®":** [dhs.gov/see-something-say-something](https://dhs.gov/see-something-say-something)
- **DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships:** [dhs.gov/CP3](https://dhs.gov/CP3)
- **Insider Threat Mitigation:** [cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/insider-threat-mitigation](https://cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/insider-threat-mitigation)
- **National Safety Council:** [nsc.org/](https://nsc.org/)

- **Pathway to Violence:** [cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/pathway-violence](https://cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/pathway-violence)
- **Society of Human Resource Management:** [shrm.org/](https://shrm.org/)
- **The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health:** [cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm](https://cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm)
- **Active Shooter Preparedness:** [cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/active-shooter-preparedness](https://cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/active-shooter-preparedness)

- **Department of Labor Workplace Violence Program:** [dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/human-resources-center/policies/workplace-violence-program](https://dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/human-resources-center/policies/workplace-violence-program)
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation Resource Library:** [fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/library](https://fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/library)
- **Occupation Safety and Health Administration Workplace Violence:** [osha.gov/workplace-violence](https://osha.gov/workplace-violence)