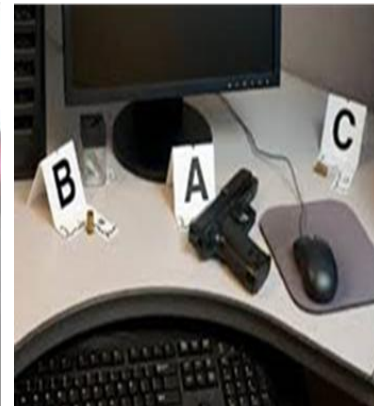




Workplace Violence



Roughly 2 million Americans experience some form of workplace violence, which poses a significant challenge for employers to confront. Co-workers and former co-workers remain the targets of choice for offenders, who often seek to compensate for strong feelings of victimization by present or former employers. To resolve his or her feelings, the offender's behavior will escalate from threats to assaults and even shootings. A growing number of incidents occur in public places, posing major risks for bystanders.

An "Unsafe Condition"

OSHA calls a workplace unsafe if harassment, intimidation or threats occur, and notes that employees who complain about those conditions are protected under Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act of 1970. It is recommended that employers establish a zero-tolerance policy for worker-on-worker violence, including demeaning or malicious comments. Violence in the workplace can also include outside threats, such as ex-husbands or disgruntled ex-employees carrying out thefts, beatings or homicides.

The Facts on the Workplace and Domestic Violence

On average, four to five women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends each day in the United States and women experience two million injuries from intimate partner violence each year. Domestic violence can follow victims to work, spilling over into the workplace when a victim is harassed, receives threatening phone calls, is absent because of injuries or is less productive due to extreme stress.

Domestic violence is a serious, recognizable and preventable problem, similar to other workplace health and safety issues that affect businesses and their bottom lines

Workplace Violence vs. Harassment

Workplace violence and harassment have become increasing problems for companies to deal with in the early 21st century. More diversity, higher worker expectations, job and money stresses and closer roles of supervisors and employees contribute to these issues. Workplace violence relates specifically to physical threats or behaviors, whereas harassment touches on inappropriate or offensive attitudes, words and behaviors toward others. Murder is the leading cause of death in the workplace for women.

If other employees notice these signs and have concerns, they should raise them with a manager. Things to look for include:

- an unexplained rise in absences
- substance abuse
- outbursts at coworkers and customers or poor impulse control generally
- verbal abuse or threats toward coworkers and customers
- making harassing phone calls or email communications
- strained workplace relationships
- overreaction or resistance to even minor changes in workplace routine; insubordination and belligerence
- lack of attention to personal appearance, including hygiene
- interest in firearms or other weapons; access to weapons
- signs of paranoia ("everyone's out to get me") or withdrawal
- fascination with violent acts or fantasies, or a history of violence
- seeing oneself as a victim and others as persecutors; blaming others for one's problems
- obsessive behavior toward a coworker or customer, up to and including stalking
- comments about suicide
- mood swings
- domestic problems, including money troubles or family disputes.

Minimizing risk and improving security are the keys to preventing this type of workplace violence. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

offers these tips for employers seeking to protect employees; if you have concerns about violence by outsiders, ask your employer about implementing them (you can find fact sheets and more tips on OSHA's official website).

Things you should do if you are being harassed or experience work place violence:

1. *Contact the Albany State University Police (229-430-4711)*
2. *Dial 911*
3. *Contact ASU Human Resources*
4. *Report Incidents to your supervisor*

