



Workplace Violence Prevention Guidelines

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Workplace Violence Prevention Program

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Workplace Violence Prevention Program

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PURPOSE / SCOPE

This program is designed to address Violence in the Workplace. While not all aspects of this program are regulated procedures, the information is helpful in addressing some of the common emergencies employees face in the scope of their work.

This is intended to be a universal document that describes precautions and procedures that must be followed in all cases. Management and staff will develop Standard Operating Procedures for work at specific sites and for specific work tasks, which will take into account all safety concerns and will define the most effective methods of accomplishing the work objectives safely and efficiently.

All employees are encouraged to actively participate in identifying opportunities for applying administrative and/or engineering controls that would reduce these hazards.

Note: The recommendations of this program are voluntary and do not constitute regulatory requirements by the Department of Labor & Industries. However, preventing workplace violence may be subject to the following regulatory requirements:

- Provide a workplace free from recognized hazards (WAC 296-800-11005)
- Provide and use means to make your workplace safe (WAC 296-800-11010)
- Prohibit employees from entering, or being in, any workplace that is not safe (WAC 296-800-11015)
- Construct your workplace so it is safe (WAC 296-800-11020)
- Prohibit alcohol and narcotics from your workplace (WAC 296-800-11025)
- Establish, supervise, and enforce rules that lead to a safe and healthy work environment that are effective in practice (WAC 296-800-11035)

HAZARD ANALYSIS

Workplace violence is any verbal assault, threatening behavior, or physical assault occurring in or arising from the worksite. Workplace violence is gathering increasing attention from both the media and public health community. According to Labor & Industries, from 2000 to 2005, homicide accounted for 7% of all deaths in Washington workplaces. For the same time period, there were 2,094 claims filed annually for work-related violence or an average of 12 claims per 10,000 FTE.

Most people think of violence as a physical assault. However, workplace violence is a much broader problem. It is any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted in his or her employment. Workplace violence includes:

- Threatening behavior - such as shaking fists, destroying property or throwing objects.
- Verbal or written threats - any expression of intent to inflict harm.
- Harassment - any behavior that demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, annoys, alarms or verbally abuses a person and that is known or would be expected to be unwelcome. This includes words, gestures, intimidation, bullying, or other inappropriate activities.
- Verbal abuse – rumors, swearing, insults or condescending language.
- Physical attacks – hitting, shoving, pushing, kicking, rape, murder.

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Workplace violence is not limited to incidents that occur within a traditional workplace. Work-related violence can occur at off-site locations such as on a customer's property, at social events related to work, or away from work but resulting from work (a threatening telephone call to your home from a customer or fellow employee).¹

Some 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence each year. Workplace violence can strike anywhere, and no one is immune. Some workers, however, are at increased risk. Among them are public utility employees.²

Hazard Description

Workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. A workplace may be any location either permanent or temporary where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, client's homes and traveling to and from work assignments.

Methods of Evaluation

The Districts Workplace Violence Prevention Group will perform workplace hazard assessment for workplace security in the form of record keeping and review, periodic workplace security inspections, and a workplace survey. The group will identify workplace violence and security issues and make recommendations to management.

Exposure Determination

Although the risk is low, if you interact with other people at home or at work you have the potential for exposure to workplace violence.

Hazard Evaluation

- Working with the public.
- Handling money, valuables.
- Carrying out inspection or enforcement duties.
- Working alone or at night, in small numbers or in isolated areas (e.g. Meter reading, On Call staff).
- Working alone or at night in traffic areas (e.g. Flagging, On Call staff).
- Working during periods of intense organizational change (e.g. strikes, downsizing, and system changeovers).
- Rate increases, overdue utility bills, meter shut offs, sewer backups, labor negotiations, performance appraisals.

RESPONSIBILITIES

District

The District is concerned and committed to our employees' safety and health. We refuse to tolerate violence in the workplace and will make every effort to prevent violent incidents from occurring by implementing this Workplace Violence Prevention Program. We will provide adequate authority and budgetary resources to responsible parties so that our goals and responsibilities can be met.

All District personnel are responsible for implementing and maintaining this Program. We require prompt and accurate reporting of all violent incidents whether or not physical injury has occurred. We will not discriminate against victims of workplace violence.

¹ Violence in the Workplace, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety, April 13, 2005

² OSHA Fact Sheet, Workplace Violence, 2002

A copy of our Workplace Violence Prevention Program is readily available to all employees.

This program ensures that all employees, including supervisors and managers, adhere to work practices that are designed to make the workplace more secure, and do not engage in verbal threats or physical actions which create a security hazard for others in the workplace.

All employees are responsible for using safe work practices, for following all directives, policies and procedures, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

The management of the District is responsible for ensuring that all safety and health policies and procedures involving workplace security are clearly communicated and understood by all employees. Managers and supervisors are expected to enforce the rules fairly and uniformly.

This program will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Designated Person or Safety Program Coordinator

In addition, a designated representative will be responsible for assessing the vulnerability to workplace violence at the District and reach an agreement on preventive actions to be taken. This person will be responsible for developing or outsourcing employee-training programs in violence prevention and plans for responding to acts of violence. They will also audit our overall Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

Managers

Management of the District are committed to ensuring that all safety and health policies and procedures involving workplace security are clearly communicated and understood by employees. This will ensure that all employees, including supervisors and managers, comply with work practices that are designed to make the workplace more secure, and do not engage in threats or physical actions which create a security hazard for others in the workplace. It includes:

- Informing employees about our Workplace Violence Prevention Program.
- Evaluating the performance of all employees in complying with the District's workplace security measures.
- Recognizing employees who perform work practices which promote security in the workplace.
- Providing training and/or counseling to employees who need to improve work practices designed to ensure workplace security.
- Disciplining employees for failure to comply with workplace security practices.

Employees

All employees are responsible for using safe work practices, for following all directives, policies and procedures, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

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GUIDELINES/RULES

Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program

Violent acts generally occur in predictable types of worksites or settings and are associated with identifiable risk factors. They may be eliminated or controlled through effective prevention strategies. (See Appendix A for a sample workplace violence prevention program. Programs to prevent workplace violence or hazards often include the following key elements:

Management Commitment & Employee Involvement

To ensure an effective program, management and employees should work together, perhaps through a team approach, to provide the motivation, commitment of resources, and feedback to address workplace violence issues.

Hazard Assessment

Hazard assessment involves a step-by-step, common sense look at the workplace to find existing or potential hazards for workplace violence. This can include: analyzing and tracking records of violence at work; examining specific violence incidents carefully, surveying employees to gather their ideas and input, and periodic inspections of the worksite to identify risk factors that could contribute to injuries related to violence. The hazard assessment should examine vulnerability to the four categories of violence previously described – violence by customers/strangers in the field, violence by customers/strangers in the office, violence by co-workers, and violence by personal relations.

Hazard Prevention and Control

Once existing or potential hazards are identified through the hazard assessment, then hazard prevention and control measures can be identified and implemented. These measures may include (in order of general preference): engineering controls, such as locks, alarms and cameras; administrative/work practice controls, such as sign-in procedures or I.D. badges for visitors and employee assistance programs; and personal protective equipment. Posting applicable laws, such as those prohibiting assaults and stalking, in visible locations may serve as a prevention measure.

Training and Instruction

Training and instruction on workplace violence ensures that all staff are aware of potential hazards and how to protect themselves and their co-workers through established prevention and control measures.

Reporting Procedure

When a Violent Event Happens on WWD Property

- **Event Involves Strangers/Clients/Customers:**
 - Notify Supervisor.
 - Report incident to HR/Local Law Enforcement.
 - Notify FBI when violence is directed at the job function, normally contacted through/by Security, Solicitor, Inspector General, or OASAM Office.

- **Event Involves Co-Workers/Supervisors:**
 - Notify Supervisor (higher level if immediate Supervisor involved).
 - Report incident to HR/Local Law Enforcement.

- **Event Involves Suspicious Letter/Package, a Bomb, or a Personal Threat:**
 - Suspicious Letter/Package
 - Do NOT handle or open suspicious item.
 - Evacuate the area if safety at risk.
 - Notify Supervisor.
 - Immediately report the item to HR/Local Law Enforcement.
 - Event Including Bomb Threat

- **Whenever possible, if telephone threat, note the following:**
 - Telephone number where the call was received;
 - Exact time call was received;
 - Caller's sex, name, telephone number, and where calling from;
 - Details regarding callers voice (calm, excited, disguised, accent, etc.);
 - Caller's estimated age (as determined by voice);
 - Background noise, if any; and
 - If call involves a bomb threat, also ask the following:
 - When will the bomb explode?
 - Where is the bomb?
 - What does it look like?
 - What kind of bomb is it?
 - Why did you place the bomb?
 - (Sometimes the caller will respond unwittingly and provide valuable information.)
 - Notify Supervisor;
 - Immediately report the incident to HR/Local Law Enforcement;
 - Notify FBI when violence is directed at the job function,
 - Evacuate the area if safety at risk.

Bottom Line: If you reasonably believe that you have an imminent dangerous situation, call 911 or local emergency response facility immediately!

- **In the Event of a Medical Emergency, Contact the following, applicable to the event:**
 - Call 911
 - Call the Department of Labor & Industries.
 - Stay with and comfort the injured/ill person.
 - If you are trained and willing, apply CPR / first aid.

Types of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence takes several types. These types are violence by customers/strangers in the field / office, violence by co-workers and violence by personal relations.

Certain work factors, processes and actions can put people at increased risk from workplace violence. Examples include these type workplace scenario:

Type 1: Violence by customers/strangers in the field

Verbal threats, threatening behavior or physical assaults by a contractor, customers of the district or an assailant who may or may not have a legitimate business relationship with the field employee.

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Example:

While reading meters, an employee drove around the corner into a cul de sac. A teen-age driver was backing out as the employee approached in his vehicle. The employee stopped in time and waved him to back out. The teenager stopped his vehicle and got out. Then he confronted the employee and threatened to beat him up for being in his way. The kid got back in his car and sped away.

Potential Risk Factors

- Potentially violent resident
- Working alone

Preventive Measures

- Apologize to the driver
- Notify supervisor
- Leave area immediately
- Defensive driving techniques
- Document as problem area for future visits

Type 2: Violence by customers/strangers in the office

Verbal threats, threatening behavior, physical assaults, robbery or any other criminal act by a contractor, customers of the district or an assailant who has no legitimate business relationship to the workplace. The stranger enters the workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act.

Example:

A customer came into the district office complaining about a late charge on their water bill. The office clerk explained the reason for the charge. The customer got very irate and demanded that the charge be rescinded. The office clerk explained that the charge is based on guidelines set up by the district and applies to all customers equally based on timeliness of payment. The customer disagreed and became angry pounding on the counter and yelling profanities. The clerk was the only employee around and felt threatened by the customer and concerned for her safety. Fortunately, another customer entered the office to pay their bill and the irate customer left shouting, "You haven't heard the last of this!"

Potential Risk Factors

- Working in isolation
- Lack of controlled access to worksite
- Lack of security protocols
- Potentially violent customer

Preventive Measures

- Instructions on bills for dealing with billing disputes
- Minimum of two employees on premises during work hours
- Procedures for customer disputes (employee training)
- Pamphlet at front counter explaining billing and fees
- Security cameras and signage informing customers that they are under surveillance
- Physical barriers between customers and front staff
- Panic button to call police/security

Type 3: Violence by co-workers

Verbal threats, threatening behavior or physical assaults by a current or former employee or a commissioner. Fatalities related to violence by co-workers have received much media attention, but account for only a small proportion of all workplace violence related fatalities. (Strangers cause most workplace violence fatalities.)

Example:

A long-term employee was disciplined by the supervisor for poor work performance. This employee was repeatedly late for work and was not completing the assigned tasks. The employee expressed his anger to other employees and threatened to “get even with those who turned him in.” On one occasion, the employee brought a gun to work. Some employees were scared and began bringing weapons to work to defend themselves from the employee. Over the course of several weeks, the employee made snide comments and vague threats to specific people. He also began bullying the people he thought reported him to the supervisor.

Potential Risk Factors

- Stressed worker
- Threatening tone and behavior
- Use of weapons/violence to solve problems
- Retaliation, bullying

Preventive Measures

- Training (dealing with confrontation in the workplace)
- Enforce policy on no tolerance for workplace violence
- Policy prohibiting weapons in the workplace
- Policy for disciplinary action
- Access to employee assistance program or other counseling services
- Post laws against assault, stalking or other violent acts

Type 4: Violence by personal relations

Verbal threats, threatening behavior or physical assaults by a person known to an employee with whom he or she has had a personal relationship outside of work. Personal relations include a current or former spouse, lover, relative, friend or acquaintance. The assailant’s actions are motivated by perceived difficulties in the relationship or by psychosocial factors that are specific to the assailant.

Example:

One afternoon, Susan’s former boyfriend Nick shows up at the district office asking to see her. The receptionist at the front desk tells him that she is in the bathroom and should be out shortly. He heads toward the bathrooms, which are off to the side of the main entrance. Within seconds, gunshots are heard and Nick can be heard screaming obscenities. Someone in the office calls 911 while everyone else runs out of the building or hides under desks. A customer walks in, not knowing what is happening and comes face to face with Nick. Nick shoots the customer and then runs out of the building. Susan was found dead in the bathroom. During the investigation, it was discovered that there was a restraining order against Nick restricting him from coming to Susan’s workplace. Susan shared this in confidence with another co-worker but asked that she not tell anyone because she was to embarrassed, the co-worker kept it secret.

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Potential Risk Factors

- Individual with history of violent/threatening behavior
- Lack of controlled access to worksite
- No communication policy regarding restraining orders
- Domestic violence

Preventive Measures

- Domestic violence training
- Enforced policies on handling/preventing violence situations
- Controlled access to worksite
- Access to consultation with employer, employee assistance program or other counseling program
- Enforced policy prohibiting weapons
- Reporting procedures on domestic violence and restraining order
- Necessary staff notification
- Post laws against assault, stalking or other violent acts
- Security cameras and signage informing customers that they are under surveillance
- Physical barriers between customers and front staff
- Panic button to call police/security
- Job reassignment if necessary

First Aid Awareness and Actions (actions to take if hazard happens)

In the event of Workplace Violence, you would let your supervisor know and contact 911.

N/A

TRAINING

Required Materials, the use of this program, presentations, guest speakers, handouts, Videos and more.

Employee Training as needed

Supervisor Training Twice as often

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

The recommendations of this program are voluntary and do not constitute regulatory requirements by the Department of Labor & Industries. However, preventing workplace violence may be subject to the following regulatory requirements:

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- Construct your workplace so it is safe (WAC 296-800-11020)
- Prohibit alcohol and narcotics from your workplace (WAC 296-800-11025)
- Establish, supervise, and enforce rules that lead to a safe and healthy work environment that are effective in practice (WAC 296-800-11035)

Record Keeping

Record keeping is essential to the success of a workplace violence prevention program. Good records help employers determine the severity of the problem, evaluate methods of hazard control, and identify training needs. Records need to be kept in a secure location with limited access.

Evaluation

As part of an overall program covering workplace violence, employers should evaluate their safety and security measures. Management should share the evaluation results with all employees. Any changes in the program should be discussed at regular meetings of the Workplace Violence Prevention Group with proposals going to management for approval.

REVISION RECORD

Revision No.	Revision Date	Approval Date	Change
1.0.0	2-10-17		Initial design.

APPROVALS

Safety Committee Chairperson

Date

General Manager

Date

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APPENDIX

Sample Forms

WAC/RCW

- Provide a workplace free from recognized hazards (WAC 296-800-11005)
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