



SAFETY COUNCIL
CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

South Dakota Safety Council

Members-Only Webinar

Violence Prevention in the Workplace

March 5, 2015 / 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.



Presented by:

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Objectives

- Definition of workplace violence
- Definitions of disrespectful behavior
- Identify physical warning signs
- Identify abusive communication styles
- Identify conflict negotiation strategies
- Procedures to prevent a violent incident



Workplace Violence Statistics

- Homicide is the 4th leading work-related cause of death in the U.S.
- 2 million assaults/threats of violence occur each year in the workplace
- 1.5 million are assaults in the workplace



What is Workplace Violence?

- An act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at a worksite
- Leading cause of death for women in the workplace



Types of Workplace Violence

- **Employer directed** – violence against workplace authority: supervisor, manager, director (5-6/month)
- **Domestic directed** – violence against partner or would-be partner
- **Property directed** - acts against any property that the company/employer owns

Violence Types

- **Commercial directed** - an employee participates in events of theft of money or property and may also involve violence
- **Co-Worker directed** – co-worker exhibits violent actions against another co-worker



Disrespectful Behavior

- **Abuse**

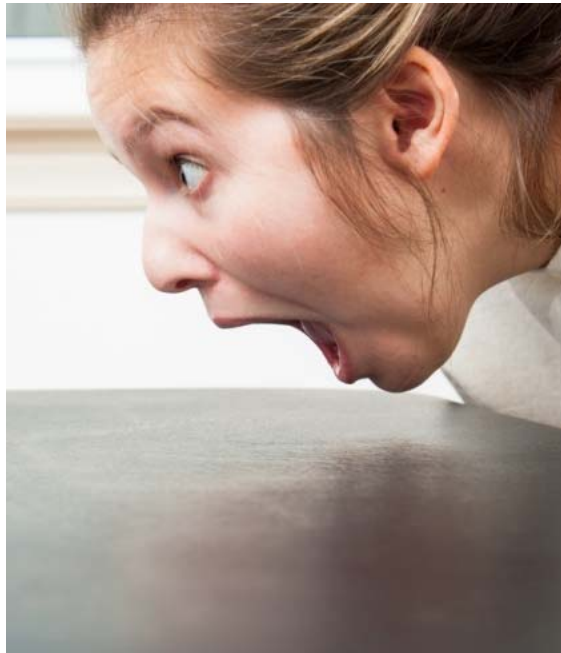
Any behavior that is physical, verbal or non-verbal that injures, demeans, or negates another individual

- **Harassment**

Verbal or physical conduct that shows hostility toward another individual because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability and creates an intimidating, hostile, or defensive working environment.

What is Intimidation?

“To make timid; make afraid, daunt, to force or deter with threats or violence.”



Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Stage 1

- Unusual behavior changes
- Uncooperative with direct supervisor
- Curse profusely
- Argues with coworkers constantly
- Spread gossip and rumors to harm others
- Unwanted sexual remarks
- Hostile toward customers/co-workers

Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

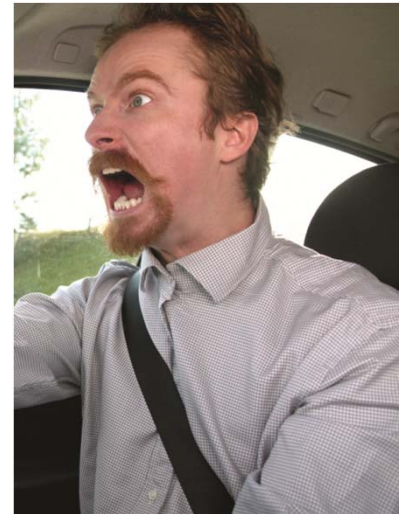
Stage 2

- Plays the role of a victim
- Writes violent or sexual notes to others
- Verbalizes the desire to harm others
- Sabotages equipment or steals property
- Disregards company policies
- Arguments increase with all personnel
- Accidents increase: physical/traffic-related
- Decrease in interest and confidence

Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Stage 3

- Intense anger
- Depression or withdrawal
- Property destruction
- Physical fighting
- Suicidal threats
- Use of weapons to harm others



Violence from the Outside

- **Strangers/Customers/Co-Workers**
 - Verbal threats
 - Threatening behavior
 - Physical assaults



Types of Workplace Violence from Outside Business

- Spouse/partner – abusive relationship
- Terminated employees
- Disgruntled customers
- Person committing armed robbery
- Gang activities
- Terroristic threats

Impacts the Bottom Line

- Decreased quality and quantity of work
- Increased absenteeism
- High turnover
- Increased worker's compensation claims
- Increased hostility/violence
- **Poor customer service**



Best Protection

- Employer establish a zero-tolerance policy
- Establish a workplace violence prevention program
- Incorporate information into your accident/incident prevention program, employee handbook, or standard operating procedures

Three Steps to Defuse Hostility

- **Reflect** on the hostile person's feelings and wait for them to respond
- **Restate/Recognize** the hostile person's concerns
- **Resolve** the problem

Diffuse Hostility

- Do not take it personally (take a deep breath)
- Let them vent
- Listen (it is the great equalizer)
- Maintain eye contact
- Use person's name
- Take notes (ask permission?)
- Ask logical questions (ask WHAT, not WHY)
- Apologize and mean it



How to Defuse Conflict Situations

- Project calmness
- Sit or stand in a position so that the person cannot block your access to an exit
- Acknowledge the person's feelings
- Create an opportunity for the person to calm down
- Ask if you can move to a quieter and safer area



Defuse

- Encourage them to talk and listen patiently
- Point out choices for resolution
- Break larger problems into smaller, more manageable ones



Difficult People

- Know what they are doing
- Get some satisfaction out of being difficult
- Treat many people this way – not just you
- Have been acting this way for a long time



Difficult People

- We give difficult people:
 - Permission to treat us badly
 - Satisfaction in knowing they can control us
 - A reward which causes them to continue their negative behavior

They want to do their own thing, in their own time, in their own way, and without any interference from us.

The two emotions they use are: **HURT** and **ANGER**

How to Handle Verbal Abuse

- Natural Reaction: Confrontation!
- Studied Response: Deflection and Redirection
 - “I appreciate that, but...”
 - “I understand that, but...”
 - “I hear that, but...”
 - “I got that, but...”
 - “I’m sorry you feel that way, but...”



Communication Styles

Do Not:

- Brush them off
- Use apathy
- Be cold towards them
- Be condescending
- Be robotic
- Give them the “run around”



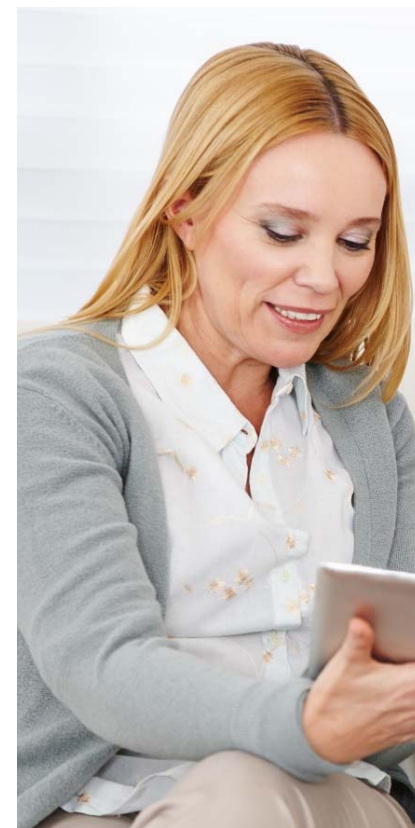
Communication

Do Not:

- Reject their demands from the start!
- Pose challenging body language
- Make sudden movements that could be perceived as threatening
- Belittle the person
- Criticize the agitated person
- Down play the situation
- Make false promises you cannot keep

How to “Talk Down” Someone Who Is Threatening

- Empathize
- Let the person vent
- Good customer service makes a difference
- Good people skills go a long way!



Take all threats seriously!



Dealing with Violent People

- Give physical space
- Avoid staring
- Speak softly
- Don't judge
- Observe body language
- Avoid touching
- Have a code to signal others
- Mentally prepare to act



Verbal Judo – Five Step Model

- Ask (Ethical Appeal)
- Set Context (Reasonable Appeal)
- Present Options (Personal Appeal)
- Confirm (Practical Appeal)
- Act (Determination of Appropriate Action)

Ask (Ethical Appeal)

- Let people know *why* you are saying what you are saying. With this step, you can usually generate voluntary compliance.



Set Context (Reasonable Appeal)

- Let them know you are concerned about them
- You then ground yourself in professionalism by giving reasons, policies, and procedures



Present Options (Personal Appeal)

- Present options, not threats
- Options give the person the power of choice
- Options need to be specific which is a key secret of persuasion – helping people see what you want them to see

Confirm (Practical Appeal)

- Use this question:
“Is there anything that I can say or do at this time to earn your cooperation? I’d sure like to think there is.”



Act (Determination of Appropriate Action)

- If you still cannot gain cooperation, then you must act as pleasant and as positive as you can
- This keeps the person off balance!



Additional Protections

- Provide safety education
- Secure workplace (video cameras, extra lighting, alarm systems, ID badges)
- Instruct employees to refrain from entering any location they feel is unsafe
- Buddy system/security assistance

How Can Employees Protect Themselves?

- Learn how to recognize a violent situation
- Alert supervisors to any safety concerns
- Report all incidents immediately
- Avoid traveling alone into unfamiliar settings
- Carry only minimal money and required identification

Following an Incident

- Provide prompt medical care
- Report violent incidents to local police
- Inform victims of their rights to prosecute perpetrators
- Discuss situation with staff members
- Report and log all incidents and threats
- Offer stress de-briefing sessions
- Offer post-trauma counseling
- Investigate/monitor trends

So . . . what can you do?

- Get to know the people around you and agree to look out for each other
- Improve communication
- Notify management of any suspicious activities
- Watch for the warning signs
- Promote workplace integrity between all employees



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Resources

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<http://southdakotasafetycouncil.org/courses/c-home.cfm>