

Ceridian Connection

a monthly e-newsletter

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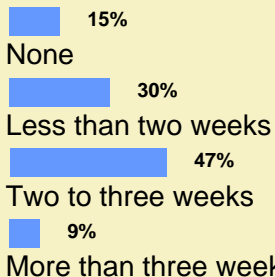


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Reader Poll

How much annual paid vacation time does your company offer new hires?



total votes: 243
margin +/- 1

HR Trends

According to career publisher Vault's *Office Supplies Survey*, 67 percent of employees admit that they've taken supplies from work for personal use.

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Workplace violence: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

A lottery employee who was apparently unhappy about being passed over for a promotion, calmly walked into the Connecticut state lottery office and shot to death four of his supervisors.

An eco-terrorist group torched nearly completed luxury condominiums.

And just outside Cincinnati, a man walked into a Kmart store and shot an employee and then critically wounded a customer who was trying to chase him down.

Three different scenarios; one underlying theme: they all happened in the workplace.

Although many companies are protected by security guards, alarm systems and sophisticated badges that prohibit nonemployees from entering, violence continues to happen in the workplace. That's why organizations are urged to take a more proactive approach toward preventing workplace violence.

But it couldn't happen here. Could it?

While headline-grabbing incidents like the ones above are certainly startling, they can also lead to misconceptions about workplace violence. You may think, "That would never happen here" or "Our company only hires quality employees."

Armed with these misperceptions, organizations might not want to spend time or money on prevention efforts. However, workplace violence can and does affect employers large and small, in both cities and rural areas. Because of the numerous ways violence can affect the workplace, no employer is completely immune from the risk.

The alarming statistics speak for themselves:

- There is an average of 20 homicides and approximately two million assaults and threats of violence per year in the workplace.
- Workplace homicide has been described as the fastest growing form of homicide in the country.
- The leading cause of death on the job for women is homicide.
- The second leading cause of death on the job for men is homicide.
- It's estimated that corporate America spends roughly \$6 billion per year in the aftermath of workplace violence.
- Approximately 43 percent of those threatened and 24 percent of those attacked at work don't report the incident.

Sources: *Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Study on Workplace Violence*, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Labor, *National Safe Workplace Institute*, *National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)*.

Take a proactive approach

When it comes to workplace violence, an ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure. Much under reaction to violence is due to the belief that violence is random and unpredictable. Experts say that violence can be predicted and proactive actions will reduce the risk. Many companies, including Ceridian, offer services to help identify potential problems and behaviors that may escalate into violent acts.

- Risk reduction.
- Improved employee morale.
- Increased feelings of security.
- Enhanced supervisory skills.
- Early identification of issues.
- Business cost reduction.
- Improved capability to positively resolve conflicts.
- Reduced legal liability.
- OSHA compliance.

Source: *National Institute for the Prevention of Workplace Violence, Inc.*

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Ceridian has partnered with Professional Workplace Interaction, Inc. (PWI) since 1997 to help organizations recognize specific warning signs, create and implement crisis response teams and restore a feeling of safety by discouraging threats and acts of workplace violence. Ceridian Workplace Violence Prevention Services offers everything from one-time training to 24/7 access to violence prevention specialists.

"The goal is early intervention," explains Dave Smith, CEO of Professional Workplace Interaction. "Ceridian partners with PWI to offer training that helps companies identify inappropriate behaviors and teaches employees how to report these problems at their earliest stages so that low-level incidents don't escalate into high-profile violent acts."

Smith defines workplace violence as any incident that could increase in intensity and threaten the safety of an employee, customer or vendor, have an impact on any employee, customer or vendor's physical or psychological well-being, cause damage to company property or interrupt normal business operations.

The process of reaching hands-on violence can be broken into three separate and distinct stages from inappropriate to extreme behavior. Once the escalation process and warning signs are defined, employees recognize seemingly insignificant and often minimized threatening or inappropriate behaviors linked to violence, improving early reporting and intervention. "Whenever one of these incidents hits the media, coworkers report that they aren't surprised by who committed the crime. They usually say that the accused employee had acted strangely or made threatening comments in the past, but thought it was just part of his quirky personality," Smith says. "Instead of pinpointing troubled employees after the fact, we need to ensure that employees can recognize and properly report these suspicious employees before they act out."

Ronnie Bragen, product manager for Ceridian's EAP and Work-Life Services, says, "Ceridian leverages its employee assistance program (EAP) to help companies identify potential problems. For example, if a manager calls the EAP about a problem employee, they might be advised that the behavior is a red flag and could escalate into a bigger problem. That's when we can raise awareness with the manager and offer threat and risk behavior assessments to prevent troubling behavior from turning into violent acts."

Types of perpetrators

Smith states that organizations need to consider four perpetrator types when developing a plan to manage the risk of workplace violence.

Type one perpetrators have no legitimate relationship to the workplace. They usually enter the workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act. Terrorist acts involving the workplace could be considered type one.

Type two perpetrators are customers, clients or others who have a legitimate relationship with the company, such as vendors, contractors or visitors. Risk of violence can result from an enraged, out-of-control individual.

Type three perpetrators have an employment relationship with the organization, as a current or former employee, supervisor or manager. Some of the risks include harassment, romantic obsession, fighting, suicide and physical retaliation after discipline or termination.

Lastly are type four perpetrators who have a personal relationship with a current or former employee and are usually a friend, acquaintance, relative or partner. Romantic triangle conflicts, domestic violence and stalking can arise from these perpetrators.

Most organizations are exposed to all four types of perpetrators to varying degrees, so they need to be ready to manage a variety of scenarios. Smith recommends that companies:

- Organize and train a crisis management and threat assessment team.
- Establish a workplace violence policy.
- Develop an emergency response plan.
- Train management and employees to recognize and report potential threats of violence.
- Violence prevention must become an ongoing process not a one time program; annual refresher training is highly recommended.

Ceridian Workplace Violence Prevention Services can help organizations create and implement all of these preventive measures.

Warning signs associated with violent behavior

It's important to know what to watch for. The following warning signs are highly correlated to workplace violence:

- Fascination with weapons.
- Substance abuse.

- Severe stress.
- Violent history.
- Hostile behavior.
- Romantically obsessed behavior.
- Bizarre behavior or severe changes in psychological functioning.
- Decreased or inconsistent productivity.
- Social isolation and poor peer relationships.
- Poor personal hygiene.
- Signs of depression or other mental illness.
- Emotionally erratic behavior with drastic changes in personality.

Escalation process of violent behavior

Concerning violence, inappropriate behaviors are sometimes referred to as "levels," "stages" or "steps" in the escalation process. It is generally agreed that there are three identifiable groups of risk indicators:

Stage 1 - Inappropriate violent behaviors

Indicators are subtle and obscure, sometimes overlooked, most likely to be ignored, and often denied as a problem related to violence.

Stage 2 - Inappropriate violent behaviors

Indicators are more pronounced and there is generally an increased uneasiness among fellow workers, but the behaviors are still often ignored. Denial continues to be present. Some reporting may occur, but not as often as it should.

Stage 3 - Extreme violent behaviors

This is the most severe form of actual hands-on violence and cannot be denied. The individual who displays Stage 3 violence is very dangerous.

Although these warning signs are correlated to violence, only a trained threat assessment professional can truly evaluate their potential risk. These behaviors are not one-time occurrences, but usually part of a pattern and suggestive of an overall style of inappropriate violent behavior. Threat assessment professionals can often identify, through assessment interviews, any additional risk factors and warning signs originally not considered relevant or important.

"Combining training and threat assessment services is an effective way to help companies keep problems from escalating and reduce the risk of workplace violence," explains Bragen. "We want to help organizations do all they can to recognize and prevent violence from occurring at the workplace."

For more information about Ceridian's Workplace Violence Prevention Services, contact your Ceridian representative.

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