



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

April is National Workplace Violence Prevention Month. Violence, harassment, and intimidation prevention should always be an integral component of your overall safety program.

On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. That's more than 10 million women and men per year.¹ This violence may impact the workplace when a domestic violence victim is targeted by their abuser at their place of employment. There is growing research to indicate the correlation between domestic violence and active shooter incidents in the workplace.²

Who is at Risk for Workplace Violence?

There are four major types of workplace violence identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), including:

1. Criminal intent/random violence (robbery, carjacking, etc.).
2. Customer/client violence in dealing with difficult people.
3. Violence directed at a coworker.
4. Violence involving a personal relationship (such as domestic violence).

While workplace violence can affect anyone, certain risk factors increase a person's risk, including gender and occupation. Women are vulnerable to domestic violence in the workplace. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Women made up 8.1% of all workplace fatalities but represented 16.3% of all workplace homicides in 2020³. In general, the occupations with the highest risk of workplace violence include any that interact with the public, are open after dark, and those serving alcohol.

The State of New Jersey has directed that all local governments implement a policy that addresses domestic violence in the workplace. A model policy is available in the [MEL Model Employee Practices Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

In addition to applying the requirements established by this policy, employers are encouraged to initiate several measures that can help create a safer workplace and assist employees in recognizing concerning behavior. Employers must cultivate an environment where employees have a clear understanding of appropriate employee conduct and a comprehensive understanding of how to report any alarming behavior. Here are seven steps to take to make sure your workplace violence prevention training is effective:

1. Analyze your workplace for exposure and to reduce risks.
2. Create a supportive work environment and encourage the reporting of suspicious behavior or incidents requiring further examination by supervisors.
 - a. Include Human Resources services
 - b. Employee Assistance Programs
3. Include communication skills, empathy, and de-escalation training as part of an overall employee training curriculum.
4. Employ a clear no-tolerance [Workplace Violence Policy](#) with appropriate sanctions in place, and provide initial and periodic training on your policy.
5. Leadership must commit to a non-violent workplace and convey this message to all employees during formal and informal training.
6. Train employees to recognize warning signs/triggers that could result in violent behavior.
7. Have an emergency action plan which should include:
 - a. Procedures to deal with violent or potentially violent individuals.
 - b. Communication procedures during crises.
 - c. Procedures for lockdowns/evacuations.
 - d. Train employees on the plan. Consider drills to test your plan and better prepare your employees.

A safe workplace depends on the efforts of employees at all levels of the organization. A commitment to a violence-free environment can lessen the likelihood of an incident occurring, reduce the impact should an incident occur, and assist in ensuring that employees feel safe in the workspace.

The MEL Safety Institute (MSI) offers the [Employee Conduct and Violence Prevention in the Workplace](#) course in [MSI LIVE](#). This hour and a half course focus on violence in the workplace and steps that can be taken by employees to promote a safe work environment. Topics discussed include the four types of workplace violence, how to recognize the warning signs of potential violence, and coping and de-escalation strategies. Recent domestic violence legislation is also discussed. The Department of Homeland Security's Active Shooter video and active shooter strategies are a component of this course.

For additional resources regarding Active Shooter Training, visit the [N.J. Office of Homeland Security](#).

¹ Gold, L. (2020). Domestic Violence, Firearms, and Mass Shootings. *Journal of American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*.

² National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2021, April 18). *Statistics*. Retrieved from National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: <https://ncadv.org/STATISTICS>

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Summary, 2020. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.nr0.htm>