

Workplace Violence Warning Signs

Be Aware of the Warning Signs of Workplace Violence-Why It Matters...

- One-sixth of violent crimes occur in the workplace.
- There are over 1.5 million incidents a year.
- As many as 18,000 people are assaulted at work each week.
- Violence is the third-leading cause of workplace deaths. More than 600 workers die each year.
- Guns are involved in 80 percent of workplace deaths.
- Violence costs American industry millions in lost productivity, legal fees, and other related expenses every year.
- Violent incidents often have a long-term impact on employees, who may feel distressed and insecure for months after an incident.

Employee violence continues to plague American workplaces. Just a few months ago, a fired utility company worker shot his way into his supervisor's office and killed himself there. The employee had been fired earlier that day after working for the company for 28 years. In this incident the employee turned his gun on himself. Usually it's a supervisor and co-workers who are gunned down.

How do you know when an employee will resort to violence? You can never be sure, but you should always keep your eyes open for signs. "People rarely commit a violent act 'out of the blue,' and people don't 'just snap,'" says the Santa Clara County (California) Domestic Violence Council. "A violent act is almost always preceded by a number of warning signs or changes in behavior." As the council says, "a troubled employee becomes a troubling employee," to the point where co-workers become afraid of this person. Here's an abbreviated list of possible warning signs developed by the council:

1. Veiled or open threats of violence
2. Irritability, belligerence, or hostility
3. Excessive focus on guns or boasting of weapons collections
4. Changes in behavior-deterioration of work performance or becoming inappropriately withdrawn, increasingly angry, agitated, or out of touch with reality
5. A resumption or escalation of drug and/or alcohol abuse
6. Reacting with great stress to workplace events such as layoffs, discharges, demotions, etc.
7. Blaming others or holding grudges
8. Depression, paranoia
9. "In your face" behavior
10. A history of violent, reckless, or antisocial behavior
11. References to or identification with mass murderers and infamous incidents of workplace violence

Use caution and good judgment in evaluating troubling employee behavior. Even if an employee displays one or more of these signs, it doesn't mean that he or she will

necessarily become violent. Some of these signs may be symptoms of other problems- emotional, financial, family, or personal. Always use good judgment when evaluating the behavior of others. Try to talk to the employee before things get out of hand. If that fails, consult with mental health experts or an outside healthcare resource. But whatever you do, don't wait for violence to erupt before you act.

You can make sure all your supervisors and other employees are aware of the warning signs of workplace violence.

Business and Legal Report's booklet, [How to Prevent Violence in the Workplace](#), covers how to recognize and stop potentially violent situations and how to take precautions to reduce the chance of becoming a victim of violence.

Don Dressler Consulting is an authorized distributor of BLR products and can assist you with how to best use these resources for your business. We can also provide training for your supervisors or your employees.

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