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What Key Strategies are Companies Using to Mitigate a Violence at the Workplace Incident?

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What Key Strategies are Companies Using to Mitigate a Violence at the Workplace Incident?

Abstract

[Excerpt] Over 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence every year, with the most common type of workplace violence crime being assault. There are various types of incident faced by different establishments. And even though private companies, over-all, face the least number of violence incidents, it's a growing trend that needs immediate attention.

Workplace violence is a serious concern for workers' mental health and well-being in high risk work sectors, and can also affect the organization adversely. Workplace aggression is a stressor at the workplace that relates to a range of physical, psychological and behavioral strains. For instance, incidents of nonfatal assaults at the workplace can result in various types of physical injuries, ranging from bruising to concussions. Psychological consequences include anger, fear, anxiety, stress, frustration, and symptoms of post-traumatic-stress-disorder. Moreover, reduced work functioning, as a behavioral consequence related to workplace violence, is viewed as employees' productivity and performance at work given a certain state of health. It can be quantified by self-reported loss of productivity and experiences of limitations at work.

Keywords

human resources, mitigate a violence in the workplace incident, workplace violence, workplace aggression, stressor, workplace mistreatment, broken windows theory, zero tolerance, employee assistance programs, risk assessments, risk management

Comments

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RESEARCH QUESTION

What key strategies are companies using to mitigate a Violence at the Workplace incident?

INTRODUCTION

Over 2 million American workers are victims of workplace violence every year, with the most common type of workplace violence crime being assault. There are various types of incident faced by different establishments (See Appendices A and B). And even though private companies, overall, face the least number of violence incidents, it's a growing trend that needs immediate attention.

Workplace violence is a serious concern for workers' mental health and well-being in high risk work sectors, and can also affect the organization adversely. Workplace aggression is a stressor at the workplace that relates to a range of physical, psychological and behavioral strains. For instance, incidents of nonfatal assaults at the workplace can result in various types of physical injuries, ranging from bruising to concussions. Psychological consequences include anger, fear, anxiety, stress, frustration, and symptoms of post-traumatic-stress-disorder. Moreover, reduced work functioning, as a behavioral consequence related to workplace violence, is viewed as employees' productivity and performance at work given a certain state of health. It can be quantified by self-reported loss of productivity and experiences of limitations at work.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

There are many types of workplace violence and it is important to distinguish between them. The major types of workplace violence include (1) employee and external perpetrator, (2) employee and customer/client, and (3) employee to employee (see Appendix C for descriptions of each). Our mitigation strategies are mostly applicable to the last of those, incidents which involve co-worker violence.

More severe forms of workplace mistreatment are likely to occur when smaller problems are left to fester. This is the basic tenet of the 'broken windows' theory- when broken windows are left unfixed and minor crimes unpunished, criminal behavior is perceived as being encouraged. It has further been noted that, the broken windows theory can be applied to workplaces trying to prevent and deal with workplace violence. If what is perceived by the organization to be trivial isn't handled immediately, more severe forms of workplace violence may result. Thus, it is recommended to include training on workplace violence in an organization's equal employment opportunity management program; to discuss multiple forms of interpersonal mistreatment simultaneously rather than independently.

When creating a workplace violence policy, it is important the language is concise and clear. Employees should have no doubt as to whether there is zero tolerance for violence or an outlined plan of action to handle violent employees. The procedure in handling violent behavior should be easily understood and clearly outlined. Those who are the victims of the violent acts

should know how to proceed in making their superiors aware of their situation. The policy should detail exactly how employees should report violent behavior.

If an employee becomes violent in the workplace, there are certain actions that need to be taken by the employer. First is, to follow the workplace violence policy directly without deviation. It is vital employees know upon being hired that should they become violent, the policy will be followed strictly with no exceptions. When exceptions are made for certain employees more problems arise, such as potentially violent grudges or legal action. If the employer believes that an employee is threatening other employees, the aggressor should be immediately referred to the company assistance program and disciplined for violating the company workplace violence policy. If the organization has a 'zero tolerance policy' for violent employees, then that individual must be disciplined and terminated. The policy should clearly state what constitutes a threat and the procedure to deal with threats.

Human resources management has several methods or strategies which, if used consistently, can work toward preventing workplace violence.

- Well-designed jobs
- Thorough screening and hiring processes
- Effective education and training programs
- Fair and equitable compensation systems
- Functioning communications and reporting channels
- Appropriate and meaningful performance evaluation
- Careful layoff policies and procedures

Additionally, effective security systems should be ensured for the safety of all people who are part of the organization. Development of employee assistance programs and provision of counseling services also help in mitigating workplace violence.

Finally, from the view of the risk management, conducting frequent critical vulnerability risk assessments and developing comprehensive interrelated emergency management plan with local services providers including employee support is helpful to identify and prepare potential risk. Above all, top management commitment and senior management is very essential for the integration and collaboration to allow organizations to use above multiple intervention strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

Workplace violence is a significant occupational hazard in the American workplace. The trends indicate that violence will continue to increase in the workplace, just as it has in healthcare sectors and schools. Whether leading to homicide or not, most acts of workplace violence do not occur spontaneously without warning. In all but rare instances, precursors are present: behaviors and events that point to possible violence. Environmental, personal and situational factors can warn of potential violence. The sheer predictability of some violence, and the opportunity that most violence permits for intervention, render it largely preventable.

Every organization aspires to be violence-free and though violence is, by human nature, often not rational or predictable, it can be anticipated and mitigated through planning and preparation.

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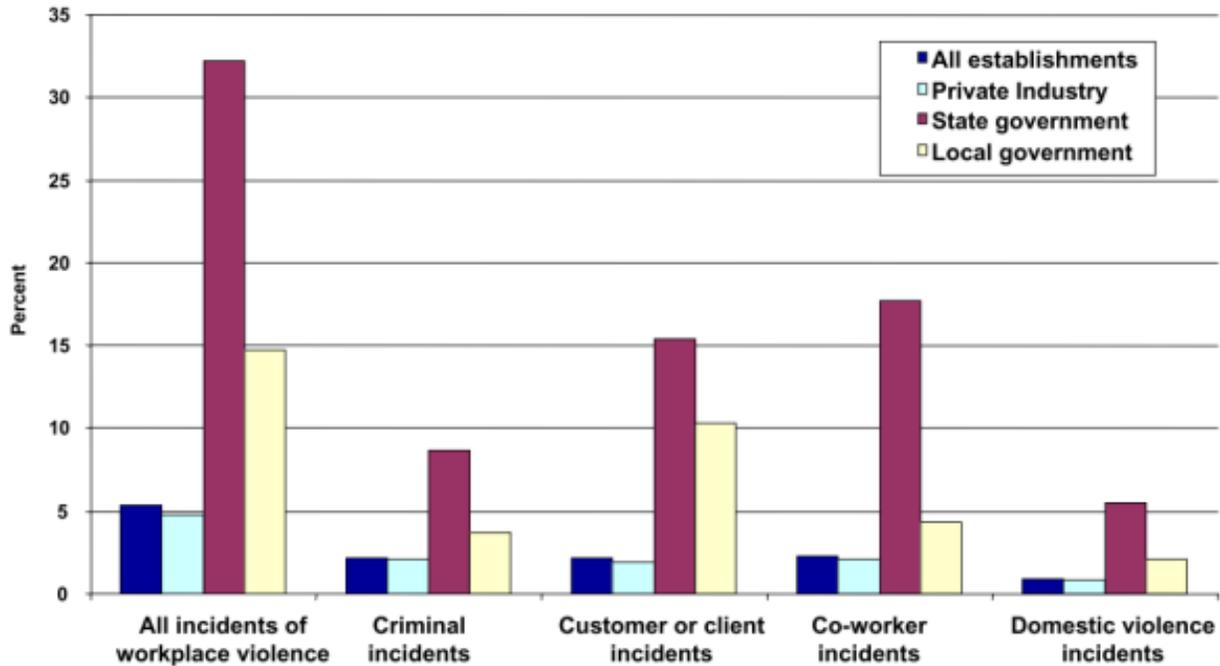
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APPENDIX A

Percent of establishments experiencing an incident of workplace violence by type of incident and ownership, United States, 2005



Source: Sweet, A. M. (2017). *Workplace violence: A comprehensive look at OSHA recordkeeping* (Order No. 10610394). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1914685900). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1914685900?accountid=10267>

APPENDIX B

| | | Physical Actions | Verbal Actions |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| | |  | Overt aggression |
| Mobbing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabotage • Stalking | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumors • Taunting • Organizing actions against the victim |
| Bullying | | | |
| Harassment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pranks • Property damage • Sexual | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insults • Sexual • Discrimination |
| Threatening behavior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throwing objects • Destroying property | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements that elicit alarm or threaten a person's welfare |
| Intimidation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaking fists or other gestures | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements that instill fear or alarm |
| Disrespect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye rolling • Laughing at a person | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swearing • Using condescending language |

Source: Chechak, Derek & Csiernik, Rick. (2014). Canadian Perspectives on Conceptualizing and Responding to Workplace Violence. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. 29. 55-72. 10.1080/15555240.2014.866474.

APPENDIX C

| Type | Persons Involved | Actions or Characteristics | Risk Factors | Response Strategies |
|------|--|---|--|--|
| I | Employee and an external perpetrator (e.g., robber) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical violence by unknown criminal with no tie to the organization • Robbing a bank or convenience store, or mugging or robbing a taxicab driver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling or exchanging money with the public • Working alone • Working at night or early in the morning • Working in secluded locations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on physical security • Employee training • Limit or eliminate single-staffing practices |
| II | Employee and a client (or a patient, family member, or customer) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts that typically occur during the worker's normal course of employment • Perpetrator has a legitimate connection to the organization, even if only temporary (e.g., bus patron) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotionally charged environment • Health care and emergency medical response workers; social service employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular training in preventive measures |
| III | Two coworkers (can be current or former employees) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment, stalking, and bullying • Most likely to present observable warning signs to other employees • Perpetrator often targets the person he or she perceives as responsible for some wrongdoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees with trait anger, emotional dysregulation, or personality style • Perceived organizational injustice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend to warning signs and implement prevention programs • Consistent disciplinary procedures |
| IV | Two employees in a personal relationship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of intimate partner violence whose situation manifests at work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive relationship • Economic stress • Work-home interference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, not punishment, for victims of intimate partner violence |

Source: Baron, Neuman, & Geddes, 1999; Castillo & Jenkins, 2004; Douglas & Martinko, 2001; FBI, 2004,

Source: Chechak, Derek & Csiernik, Rick. (2014). Canadian Perspectives on Conceptualizing and Responding to Workplace Violence. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. 29. 55-72. 10.1080/15555240.2014.866474.