



Workplace Violence / Shooting Safety Talk

Workplace violence occurs all too often in the United States. **Workplace violence** is defined as any threat, disruptive behaviors, intimidation, physical aggression, or act of violence in the workplace including homicide. Homicide in the workplace is currently the fourth leading cause of death on the job. In 2014 alone, there were 409 deaths on the job due to homicide. Workplace shootings are the number one cause of workplace homicides.

Workplace Shooting Statistics in the United States (source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks homicide statistics in U.S. workplaces. According to the BLS, there were 1,756 homicides in the workplace between 2011 and 2014. Intentional shootings were responsible for 1,375 of those deaths, over 78%. While these deaths represent a relatively small number of all workplace fatalities in the United States, it is still important to take this type of incident seriously at your workplace.

Any workplace can experience workplace violence or a workplace shooting, but some sectors are more likely to experience these kinds of events than others. People who work where money is exchanged are at a higher risk factor for workplace violence. Other career fields such as EMS, police officers, healthcare workers, customer service representatives, food service workers, and delivery drivers are more likely to experience violence while on the job. Factors such as time of day worked, geographical area of work, working alone or in small groups, also has impact on whether someone is more likely to experience workplace violence. Mentioned above, no workplace is safe from one of these events occurring. Some of the most tragic shootings have taken place in schools and churches.

How to Respond During an Active Shooter Situation (source: Department of Homeland Security)

It is important to know what to do if there was ever an active shooter situation in your workplace. The Department of Homeland Security outlines some basic steps you should follow.

1. Evacuate. Get yourself to safety as quickly as possible. Know the path you need to take to exit the building or area and an alternative route as well. Leave your belongings behind. Try to help others if you can, but do not wait on anyone to evacuate. Make sure your hands are free of any objects and follow officers' instructions if any are responding to the situation.
2. Hide out. If you cannot escape, find a place to hide from the shooter. The hiding spot should not hinder your movement if you need to escape and should protect you if shots are fired your way. Remain quiet. Lock or block doors when possible.
3. Take action against the shooter. Only when your life is in imminent danger and you have no other choices, the last resort to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter. Do so by acting aggressively as possible towards him/her, throw items in their direction, yell, and commit to your actions.
4. Know the Penn State Active Shooter Policy (SY41): <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/sy41>

Summary

Always take any threat or odd behavior by an employee or visitor in your workplace seriously. Report any suspicious activity to a supervisor, security, or call the police. This alone can prevent an active shooter situation. No one wants to give thought to the possibility of one of these events occurring in their workplace, but it is important to have a plan. Knowing how to respond will greatly increase the chance to survive a workplace shooting.

