



Despite Orlando Tragedy, Employees Should Still Report Concerns About Co-Workers

News

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The article, "Despite Orlando Tragedy, Employees Should Still Report Concerns About Co-Workers," featured in the *Florida Record*, highlighted why employers should encourage open lines of communication with their employees, regarding concerns of co-workers, in light of the mass killing in Orlando.

"I'm still processing what happened over the weekend," Sarah Moore said during a *Florida Record* telephone interview. "It's disturbing that there were co-workers who did the right thing and reported what they knew. And yet it didn't prevent this tragedy from occurring."

Employers, however, should not take that as a sign that encouraging employees to report a co-worker about whom they have concerns doesn't work, Sarah said.

"It does not mean we should not foster the means of reporting co-workers who are a threat or a danger," she said. "We have got to have those open means of communication or there is no way we can have to try to stop it."

In the wake of such a tragedy, it is natural for employers to wonder about their own preparedness, not only to protect their employees and work environment, but also to reduce the liability they might face, Sarah said.

"The difficulty is, and as we saw over the weekend, it's impossible to crystal ball this stuff," she said. "Mostly what we're seeing right now is people trying after the fact to see if there is something that could have been done that would have prevented this."

That is the same thing plaintiff's attorneys will look for after the fact in determining who should be sued and employers can be pulled into that, Sarah said.

"You can rest assured that either the employee or the employee's estate will look into filing for workers' compensation or a wrongful death tort," she said.

An employer who finds themselves in this position can expect to be closely examined, Moore said.

"Analyzed with tremendous detail," she said. "Looking for any sign that they could have foreseen what occurred and whether they took any steps to prevent it."

Further complicating matters is how emotionally charged such cases become in an atmosphere in which all sides are mourning a tragedy, Sarah said.

"The loss is so great and there is no way to compensate it adequately, even in cases where liability is found," she said. "And in cases where no liability is involved, it leaves a gaping hole for all involved."

For all these reasons, employers need to do all they can to work toward prevention and to promote a work environment where employees feel safe, where adequate security is in place and open communication is encouraged.

"There is no easy solution," Sarah said. "The key is communication. Employers need to look at how they can have their workplace set up that provides an environment that fosters all these things."

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