

Employers Can Minimize Risk of Workplace Violence

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The FBI estimates that each year 1 million people are exposed to some form of workplace violence. A recent study found that the No. 2 cause of on-the-job deaths among women was workplace violence. No business is immune from the risk of violence on its premises.

While violence cannot always be anticipated, this does not relieve employers of their obligation to provide a safe workplace. First, federal law requires it. With the Department of Labor adding investigators and stepping up workplace safety enforcement, compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations should be a management priority. Second, workers compensation insurance provides employers only limited protection against liability from the inevitable lawsuits following a workplace tragedy.

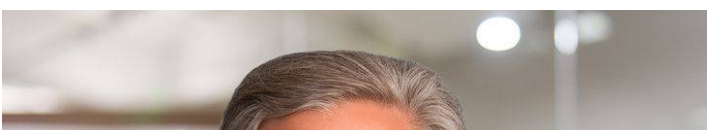
Employers must be proactive to prevent or minimize exposure to such incidents.

- Use effective pre-employment documents and conduct background checks
- Establish policies on workplace violence
- Conduct substance-abuse testing
- Develop procedures for investigating threats
- Train supervisors and employees
- Implement an employee assistance program
- Audit and improve security measures

Rarely does anyone head to the office expecting violence. There is risk, however, at every place of employment. By implementing comprehensive policies geared toward workplace safety, employers will significantly reduce the risk that their office will be the site of the next tragedy.

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