



# Preventing Workplace Violence

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It seems hardly a week goes by without some mention of a workplace incident resulting in injuries or even death. According to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, there were 13 on-the-job homicides last year in the state. In fact, FBI statistics estimate that each year 1 million Americans are exposed to some form of workplace violence. Clearly, this is an issue that employers need to take seriously.

Potentially violent situations can quickly arise from many sources. For example, an irate former boyfriend, a terminated employee or an employee under stress. Everyone brings their own unique issues, good and bad, with them to work every day. Whether workplace violence stems from a current or former employee, an unknown assailant or an employee's spouse, many incidents are foreseeable and/or preventable. Management often is ill-equipped, however, to recognize a developing situation and take appropriate action. With this in mind, the following steps summarize some of the ways employers can minimize the risk of workplace violence:

- Use effective documents and conduct background checks
- Establish policies on workplace violence
- Develop procedures for investigating threats
- Implement an Employee Assistance Program
- Audit and improve security measures

By implementing comprehensive policies to protect workplace safety, employers will significantly reduce the risk that their office will be the site of the next tragedy.

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