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Workplace Violence Prevention

October 2008



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Agenda

- Definitions
- The problem
- Possible causes
 - Contributing factors at work or outside
- Understanding conflict
- Developing a company workplace violence prevention program
- What to do if violence occurs?



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Definitions - “Workplace violence”

- Workplace violence is any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting
- A “workplace” may be any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty



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Workplace Violence Can Include:

- Beatings
- Stabbings
- Suicides
- Shootings
- Rapes
- Near-suicides
- Psychological traumas
- Threats or obscene phone calls
- Intimidation
- Harassment of any nature
- Being followed, sworn at, or shouted at



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Violent Behaviors

- The range of violent behaviors can run the gamut:
 - Physical assaults
 - Physical intimidation/bullying/harassment
 - Threats to destroy property
 - Aberrant behavior, often caused by drug or alcohol abuse



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Examples

- Verbal
 - Verbal threats to inflict bodily harm, including vague or covert threats
 - Abusive or offensive language, gestures or other discourteous conduct towards supervisors, fellow employees, or the public





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Examples , cont'd

- Verbal
 - Making false, malicious or unfounded statements against coworkers, supervisors, or subordinates which tend to damage their reputations or undermine their authority





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Examples, cont'd

- Verbal
 - Inappropriate remarks, such as making delusional statements





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Examples, cont'd

- Physical
 - Attempting to cause physical harm
 - Striking, pushing, and other aggressive physical acts against another person
 - Disorderly conduct (shouting, throwing or pushing objects, punching walls, and slamming doors)





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Examples, cont'd

- Physical
 - Fascination with guns or other weapons, bringing weapons into the workplace





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The Problem



- Murder is the leading cause of death in the workplace for females, 2nd leading cause for males
- 1 of every 6 violent crimes occurs at work



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A Few Statistics

- 2006: 788 assaults and violent deaths in the United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries
 - Of those, 540 workplace homicides in 2006 in the United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries
- Assaults at work cost 500,000 employees 1,751,100 lost days each year



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The Law

- Under the *General Duty Clause*, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970
 - Employers are required to provide their employees with a place of employment that "is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees."



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Everyone is Responsible

- Employers have a legal duty and a moral obligation to provide a safe workplace
- Employees have comparable duty and obligation to bring potentially violent situations to the attention of the company



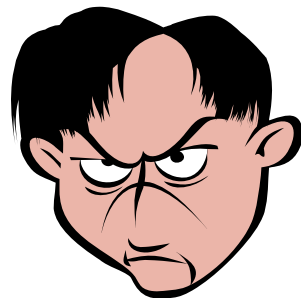


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Who Performs This Violence?

- *Strangers*
- *Customers or clients*
- *Co-workers*
- *Personal relations*



**If I don't get my raise,
I am going to . . .**



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Do People Just Snap?

- No – that is a myth...
 - A violent outburst can be better characterized as the result of a “slow burn,” an accumulation of unresolved personal problems and issues that may have gone on for years
- Examples of Stressors
 - A failing personal relationship
 - Economic hardships
 - Feelings of personal failure
 - Actual or perceived injustice in the workplace





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Contributing Work Factors



- Anger
 - Over disciplinary action
 - Over the loss of a job (or position or missed opportunity)
- Resistance to regulatory action
- Dissatisfaction with working conditions
 - Layoffs
 - Uncertainty
 - Work rule changes
 - Benefit changes



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Contributing “Home Factors” At Work

- Declining health of self or family members
- Problems with children and/or parents
 - Sandwich generation
- Domestic abuse
- Drug abuse
 - Legal, illegal
 - Alcohol
- Road rage





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Contributing “Home Factors” At Work, cont’d

- Financial problems and/or general economic pressures
 - Increasing debt or wage garnishments
- Failing personal relationship
- Feelings of personal failure
- Unwillingness to ask for help





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Contributing Outside Factors: Non-employees

- Perceived likelihood of cash or valuables on hand
- Product issues
- Company rules/policy on customer satisfaction
- Employee treatment or behavior towards customers that precipitate an incident





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Possible Attributes of a Perpetrator

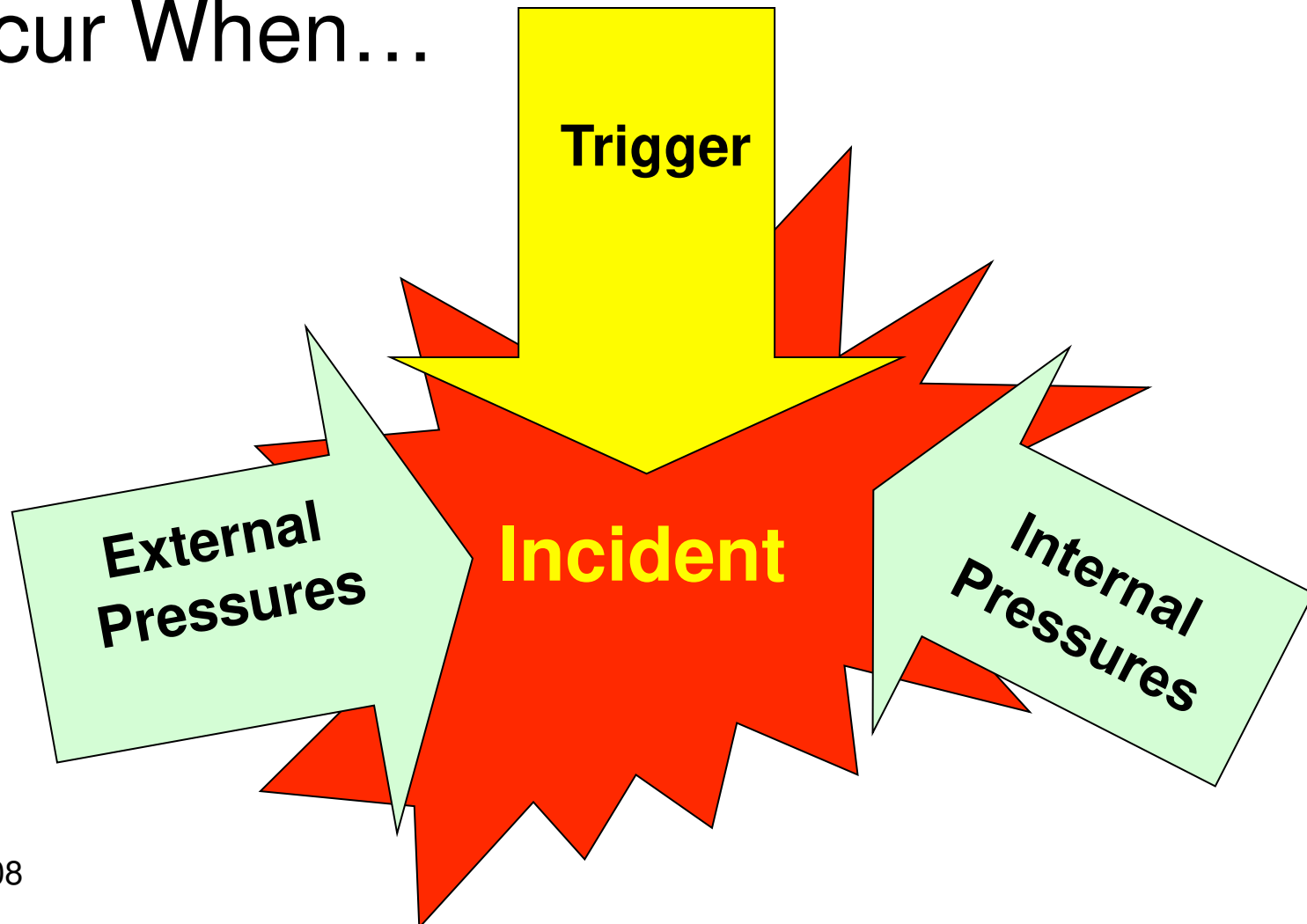
- Makes veiled or indirect threats
- Makes conditional threats (“If I don’t get what I want, someone will be hurt.”)
- Fascinated with past violent criminals
- Makes intimidating comments about weapons
- Documents others who are “causes of their problems” and keeping lists of these people
- Takes criticism poorly
- Has a ‘loner’ personality
- Has obsession with police, militaristic/survivalist causes
- Files numerous grievances and complaints
- Is inflexible – difficulty coping with change
- Is paranoid – “They’re out to get me!”
- Blames others – Does not accept personal responsibility for actions; “it’s their fault, not mine”
- Feels a sense of hopelessness – “I have nothing to lose”



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Most Non-Robbery Work Incidents Occur When...





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Understanding Conflict

- Conflict can have one or many causes
- Managers spend approximately 20% of their time dealing with conflict
- Domestic conflict can spill over into the workplace and vice versa
- Conflict can occur between all combinations of:
 - Workers, bosses, subordinates, outsiders



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Five Ways People Deal with Conflict

- Avoidance
 - Ignore the problem
- Accommodation
 - Try to satisfy everyone
- Confrontation
 - One side wins, the other loses
- Collaboration
 - Everyone works together
- Compromise
 - Each party gives in a little





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#1 Cardinal Rule

- *Never strip a person of his or her dignity*



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Developing a Company Workplace Violence Prevention Program



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Elements of a Company Program

- Policy
- Threat Assessment Response Team
- Physical audit
- Overall company plan
- Human Resource issues
- Emergency Response Plan



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A Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

- Articulate a clear policy
 - Be clear
 - Be specific
 - Be careful with words such as “zero tolerance” – What does that really mean?
 - Whatever you come up with, you must enforce it!





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Policy Guidelines

- The policy should include:
 - An outline of prohibited behaviors
 - A statement that weapons are banned
 - Management's right to inspect
 - How to report incidents
 - What the investigative follow-up will be
 - What sanctions and disciplinary actions will be taken
- Be sure to post at all company locations



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Threat Assessment Response Team

- What is a TART?
- Who should be on it?
 - Human Resources
 - Security
 - Safety
 - Facilities
 - Legal
 - Worker's Comp
 - Training
 - Employee Assistance (EAP)
 - Administration





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TART, cont'd

- Develop a written TART plan
 - Detailed description of all team members' roles; who does what and when
- Who is in charge?
 - Include succession planning
- How is the TART mobilized?
 - Face-to-face
 - All electronic methods
 - Conference call bridges



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TART, cont'd

- Outline what threats the team reviews
 - How are threats investigated?
- Document escalation strategies
 - What are the trigger points for escalation and who do they escalate to?
- Conclude all investigations with a debrief
 - What worked, what didn't work, and what needs to be changed



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Bringing the Team Up to Speed

- Start with your company's history
 - Assess the problem in your company and your readiness. History? Procedures?
- Educate all team members about the issues of workplace violence, job loss
- Develop relationships with police, fire, sheriff, local EMS.
- When first organized, meet regularly and more frequently to build knowledge and competency



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Audit Physical Security & Identification Plans



- Security survey
 - Physical security
 - Identification
 - Guards
- Control access
 - Visitors (including vendors)
 - Former employees



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Overall Company Plan

- Emergency procedures
 - What are employees and company responders supposed to do during an event?
 - Include paging instructions, recall of elevators, and interface with emergency responders
 - Document the procedures for the Threat Response Team (TART)
 - Include how to handle threats and incidents
- Restraining orders
 - Should you get a company restraining order?
 - Should be the victim get one?
 - Maybe... maybe not.



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Overall Company Plan, cont'd

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - Do you have one?
 - How are they used **before** and **after** an event?
 - Can be a great resource
- Develop a communication strategy in advance
 - What tools will you use to communicate rapidly?
 - Include using the web
 - Prewritten templates are essential
 - Select and train a media spokesperson
- Develop partnerships
 - Local police, EMS, and, of course, your EAP program vendor
- Practice, practice, practice
 - Use a workplace violence incident as an exercise narrative



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Human Resource Issues

- Hiring processes
- Applicant screening
- Employee termination procedures
- Training
 - Manager
 - Employee





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Implementing the Plan

- Empower employees to report potential problems
 - Establish open line of communication
 - Maintain strictest level of confidentiality
 - Listen to your employees
- Enforce company policies (safety, disciplinary procedures)
- Training
 - Manager
 - Employee
- Follow-up on reports



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What to Do if Violence Occurs

- Maintain self-control - Fight or Flight
 - Stop for a moment, breathe!
 - Quickly analyze situation
- Take steps to ensure safety of yourself and others if possible
 - If a gun is present, duck and cover
 - Get underneath something or behind a door
 - Don't run!
- Call appropriate Police - 9-1-1
- Notify appropriate company officials
- Get psychological help for all affected



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Government Guidelines

- California OSHA has an excellent resource for anyone developing a workplace violence plan
 - Model plan that includes: hazard assessment and correction, responsibility, communication, incident investigation, training and guidelines for record keeping.
 - www.dir.ca.gov
 - https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/worksecurity.html
 - https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/iipsecurity.html



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Great Resource: Gavin DeBecker

- Author of “The Gift of Fear”
- Offers advanced threat assessment and management training for professionals
 - Excellent 3-day course
 - <http://www.gavindebecker.com>



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THANK YOU!

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