Workplace Violence

Violence in the workplace has gained extra attention in the media lately. Shootings at large retail centers, medical professionals attacked by patients — high-profile occurrences such as these make the news, but for every headline-grabbing tragedy, thousands of events impact businesses, but are not publicized.

The term “workplace violence” covers a wide variety of incidents, from physical assault to harassment and intimidation to murder. Employees who work directly with the public, those who exchange money with customers, and those who work at night or in the early morning are at the highest risk. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that more than 2 million Americans are victims of workplace violence. That’s an alarming number, and one that should make business owners start thinking about how they can help keep their employees safe on the job.

Communication is Key
OSHA recommends a policy strictly prohibiting violence by or against employees. Announce this policy and integrate workplace violence prevention into your current employee training program. This will make clear to your personnel that violence will not be tolerated, and that a safe environment is paramount. Important topics to address include recognition, avoidance, and diffusion of potentially violent situations; and reporting an incident of workplace violence.

Self-Protection
Employees must take part in their own safety. Tell them to avoid entering unfamiliar or suspicious situations and locations. If they must carry money, limit the amount they have on them. If exchanging money with customers, establish a stringent set of safe and bank deposit procedures. Remember there is strength in numbers — whenever possible pair employees for safety.

Safer by Design
Facility design can contribute to violence prevention. To help deter would-be criminals, disgruntled employees, or employees’ acquaintances with violent intent, install video surveillance, extra lighting, alarms, and access-limiting systems such as security keypads or badges.

There is no guaranteed way to keep employees safe from workplace violence, but keeping prevention at the top of your priority list will help minimize your exposure to this increasingly common occurrence.

Federated offers resources to help you educate your employees on this vitally important topic. Seven Minute Safety Trainer® has the resources to conduct training sessions with your employees. J. J. Keller® Video on Demand offers videos on preparing for, surviving, and recovering from an active shooter threat. The Training Today® learning management system offers a course on reaction to and preparation for an active shooter. Log on to Federated’s Shield Network® for access.

Sources