

**Town of Tuxedo
Injury and Illness
Prevention Program
For
Workplace Violence**

Workplace Violence Prevention

Introduction

Workplace violence presents a serious occupational safety hazard for workers; during the last decade homicide was the third leading cause of death of all workers and the leading cause of occupational death for women workers.

Examples of high risk workplaces including healthcare settings, social services, working alone or in small numbers, service workers, public transportation drivers and many other types of public employment.

New York State requires public employers (with the exception of employers as defined in section twenty-eight hundred one-a of the education law) to perform a workplace evaluation of each worksite. The evaluation is intended to identify factors which may place the workforce at risk to occupational assaults or homicides. The results of the evaluation and the Risk Factors found should be shared with employees; this information should be reviewed initially and annually thereafter. Employers who have 20 or more full-time employees are required to develop a written Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

This document is designed to assist employers and workers to more effectively reduce the potential problem of violence in the workplace.

What Is - Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence is physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting.

Categorized As:

1. Non-specific threats of violence by employee
2. Specific treats of violence by employee
3. Threats of violence directed against an employee by a non-employee
4. Violent confrontation by a spouse or significant other with an employee over a personal/domestic dispute
5. Threats or threatening conduct by disgruntled or ex-employees
6. Violent altercations between two employees or employee and supervisor
7. Multiple assaults by intruder

TOP 10 WAYS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

- 1. Foster a supportive harmonious work environment:** Creating a culture of mutual respect can help reduce harassment and hostility in the workplace. In such a culture, employers strive to communicate openly, give employees adequate control in their work and provide them with support and recognition. Conflict and stress are lower when employees feel empowered to work independently and are motivated to work cooperatively.
- 2. Train department heads and employees how to resolve conflicts:** Conflicts on the job can be reduced by developing employee skills in negotiating, communicating effectively, team building, and resolving disputes.
- 3. Develop effective policies to protect employees from harassment:** While all employers strive to build a culture free of harassment and discrimination, they can advance this goal by having systems in place to address infractions. The key is a harassment policy that clearly denounces harassment and states unequivocally that it will not be tolerated. A thorough policy defines harassment, specifies how to report it, explains how complaints will be investigated and presents the consequences.
- 4. Establish procedures for handling grievances:** Employees need to understand grievance procedures for reporting complaints of unfair treatment, discrimination or harassment; believe that those procedures will be followed; and feel confident that concerns will be addressed promptly and confidentially.
- 5. Provide personal counseling through an employee assistance program:** Family, marital, financial and personal issues can have a profound impact on employees work performance as well as social interactions at work. An employee assistance program (EAP) provides employees with a free, easily-accessible and confidential resource for addressing personal concerns. In addition supervisory personnel can be trained how to document and address work performance and attitude problems and refer employee for help. If a violent or threatening incident occurs at work, support services can be made available to help employees cope with their fears and concerns.
- 6. Implement security programs that protect employees:** Employers have a variety of methods for ensuring workers safety, such as full time or after-hours security guards, high-tech monitoring systems, emergency warning systems, limited access key cards, strict visitor sign-in policies, new employee background screening, and safety awareness and training. Employers that regularly evaluate their security programs can best determine if they are meeting employer and employee needs. Also, employers need to make sure that employees are aware of an understanding existing security policies and procedures.
- 7. Provide employee safety education programs:** In addition to making workers aware of safety policies and employee support services, employers can provide educational materials and seminars about ways to maximize safety at work.
- 8. Provide job counseling for employees who have been laid off or fired:** Because a job is often closely tied to one's identity, being laid off can be traumatic. Employee counseling and support services can help workers develop job-seeking skills, learn how to cope with life changes, and personally and financially prepare for the future. These services also help exiting employees feel that the employer cares about them. It is helpful to train supervisory personnel to sensitively communicate layoffs and firings.
- 9. Train supervisory personnel on how to recognize signs of a troubled employee:** One way to reduce the potential for workplace violence is to intervene before an incident reaches a flash point. Supervisory personnel can be given training on how to recognize signs and symptoms of a potentially violent employee. Also, supervisory personnel can be instructed on how to be sensitive to signs of possible abuse among employees, such as frequent absences or depression.
- 10. Set up a crisis plan:** Employers may want to consider developing a crisis plan for dealing with violent incidents. The plan can include details on how to report the incident, which key internal supervisory personnel and external authorities should be alerted, how to maintain the safety of unaffected workers and security precaution to prevent further trouble. Employer also can arrange to provide individual crisis counseling and support groups for affected employees soon after the incident occurs.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Any preventive measure must be based on a thorough understanding of risk factors associated with the various types of workplace violence. Even though our understanding of the factors which lead to workplace violence is not perfect, sufficient information is available which, if utilized effectively, can reduce the risk of workplace violence. However, strong management commitment, and the day-to-day involvement of department heads, supervisors, employees and labor unions, is required to reduce the risk of workplace violence.

Every employer should establish, implement and maintain a written injury and illness Prevention Safety Program (IIPSP) and a copy must be maintained at each workplace or at a central worksite if the employer has non-fixed worksites. An effective written injury and illness prevention safety program consist of the following eight elements:

1. Responsibility
2. Compliance
3. Communication
4. Hazard Assessment
5. Incident Investigation
6. Hazard Correction
7. Training and Instruction
8. Recordkeeping

INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The Town of Tuxedo Safety Program addresses the hazards known to be associated with the three major types of workplace violence. Type I workplace violence involves a violent act by an assailant with no legitimate relationship to the workplace who enters the workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act. Type II involves a violent act by a recipient of a service provided by our establishment, such as a client, patient, customer, passenger or a criminal suspect or prisoner. Type III involves a violent act by a current/former employee, department head or supervisory personnel, or other person who has some employment-related involvement with our establishment, such as an employee's spouse or lover, an employee's relative or friend, or another person who has a dispute with one of our employees.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Program Administrator for workplace security is the Chief of Police and the authority and responsibility for implementing the provisions of this program for the Town of Tuxedo.

All Department Heads and supervisors are responsible for implementing and maintaining this program in their work areas and for answering employee questions about the program. A copy of this program is available from your department head.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Chief of Police of the Town of Tuxedo is responsible for ensuring that all safety and health policies and procedures involving workplace violence are clearly communicated and understood by all employees. Department Heads and supervisory personnel are expected to enforce the rules fairly and uniformly.

All employees are responsible for using safe work practices, for following all directives, policies and procedures, and for assisting in maintaining a safe and secure work environment.

Our system of ensuring that all our employees, including supervisors and managers, comply with work practices that are designed to make the workplace more secure and do not engage in verbal threats or physical actions which create a security hazard for others in the workplace include:

1. Informing employees, supervisors and department heads of the provisions of our program for workplace security;
2. Evaluating the performance of all our employees in complying with our establishment's security measures;
3. Recognizing employees who perform work practices which promote security in the workplace;
4. Providing training and/or counseling to employees whose performance in complying with work practices designed to ensure workplace security is deficient;
5. Disciplining workers for failure to comply with workplace security practices; and the following practices ensure employee compliance with workplace security directives, policies and procedures.

Communication

At our establishment, we recognize that to maintain a safe, healthy and secure workplace we must have open, two-way communication between all employees, including supervisors and department heads, on all workplace safety, health and security issues. The Town encourages a continuous flow of safety, health and security information between management and our employees without fear of reprisal.

