

Workplace Violence Prevention: Security Assessment

Workplace violence, such as physical assaults, or threatening or violent behavior, is a growing problem in the workplace.



Every year, millions of American workers report having been victims of workplace violence. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 18,400 workers experienced trauma resulting in time away from work from non-fatal workplace violence in 2017, with 71 percent occurring in healthcare and social assistance industry.¹ The prevention of workplace violence has emerged as a significant safety and health concern. It is the responsibility of the employer to address the risk factors that their employees and clients are potentially exposed to. Workplace violence, such as physical assaults, or threatening behavior, is a growing problem in the workplace.

Important elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program should include a hazard assessment of each location, center, and workplace, along with implementation of hazard controls and prevention measures. Effective security starts with a clear understanding of your threats and vulnerabilities. A security assessment can help assess how effective your organization's security policies are being implemented, as well as identify where gaps and vulnerabilities may exist. Additionally, it should assist in the identification or development of appropriate training.

A "one-size-fits-all" approach does not fit - nor is feasible - when completing a security assessment. The unique risks associated with different types of organizations should form the basis of the final security plan. A security assessment is a balance of cost considerations, security, visitor experience, and the efficiency of the organization.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/violence/fastfacts.html>

Employers are responsible for determining appropriate control measures that will prevent or reduce workplace violence.

Threat Analysis

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines workplace violence as “violent acts (including physical assaults and threats of assaults) directed towards persons at work or on duty.” Employers are responsible for analyzing the risk hazard data to determine appropriate control measures that will prevent or reduce workplace violence. The elements of a hazard assessment include analysis of threats through workplace evaluations, employee surveys, and record reviews.

While all threats are valid, their loss impact will vary. A threat assessment considers the full spectrum of threats for a given facility/location. An assessment of how vulnerable your organization is to a threat and the impact of loss to your organization, determines the severity of that threat.

The matrix below can be a helpful tool in prioritizing the need to reduce the risks and mitigate hazards, based on the defined threat.

Defined Threat	Vulnerability			
Loss Impact	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Minor	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Noticeable	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Severe	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Devastating	Low	Medium	High	Very High

Rating Category	Description
Very High	The risk is totally unacceptable. Immediate measures must be taken to reduce these risks and mitigate hazards.
High	The risk is unacceptable. Measures to reduce risk and mitigation hazards should be implemented as soon as possible.
Medium	The risk may be acceptable over the short term. Plans to reduce risk and mitigate hazards should be included in future plans and budgets.
Low	The risks are acceptable. Measures to further reduce risk or mitigate hazards should be implemented in conjunction with other security and mitigation upgrades.

See the following pages for practical steps your business can take.



WORKPLACE SECURITY CHECKLIST

A physical worksite assessment should consider the need for security improvements based on the type of setting and other occupational factors. Cooperation between employees and employers in identifying and assessing hazards is foundational for a successful assessment.

The assessment team should also determine how often and under what circumstances worksite assessments should be conducted. Please see our [Workplace Security Checklist \(CMO-1132AO\)](#) to aid in that process.

POLICY STATEMENT

A clearly written policy statement demonstrating top management's commitment to employees and client's safety and health is an essential element for workplace violence prevention. Important components of the statement are: the organization's commitment to creating a violence free environment for employees and clients, as well as should emphasize employee participation, and the employer's zero tolerance for violence. In addition, the policy should require prompt and accurate reporting of violent incidents and be consistently fair to all employees.

WORK AREA EVALUATION

A work area evaluation should focus on both operational and exterior physical security threat assessments.

The operational security threat assessment encompasses topics such as: who are our clients/population, employee screening/selection, employee discipline, disengagement with clients, vendor controls, etc.

Your evaluation should focus on the unique hazards associated with your organization. The exterior physical security threat assessment should entail walking the facility while identifying all entry and exit points.



Questions? Contact
Nationwide Loss Control
Services: 1-866-808-2101
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CONTROL MEASURES - ENGINEERING CONTROLS

Engineering controls are those physical changes that either remove the hazard from the workplace or creates a barrier between the employee and the hazard, such as; doors, panic buttons, additional lighting, some of which may need to be added after the assessment. Engineering controls are a reliable way to control worker exposures if the controls are designed, used, and maintained properly.

CONTROL MEASURES - WORKPLACE PRACTICE CONTROLS

Workplace practice controls are operational procedures, such as: visitor and client sign in/out, escort procedures, limiting entrances, designating areas for spouse and family visits, etc. These controls reduce access for visitors, increasing the potential to better control and monitor their movements.

It is important to implement adequate work place practices or operational controls to make effective use of engineering controls.

SECURITY CONTROL PLAN

A security control plan is a plan of action in the event of a security risk. It is essential for all organizations to review their facilities and operations along with complete threat assessments to assess their individual security threats. A security control plan will vary for every organization and potentially each workplace and must be tailored to fit the needs of the organization.

Make use of these additional resources.

To learn more about preventing workplace violence, ask your agent or our Loss Control Services team for our bulletins on [Formal Steps to Prevent Violence \(CMO-1133AO\)](#), [Supporting Clients \(CMO-1135AO\)](#), and [Three Steps to Developing Administrative Controls \(CMO-1136AO\)](#).



Providing solutions to help our members manage risk.®

For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services: 1-866-808-2101 or LCS@nationwide.com.