



# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

# Violence is a *Process*

- Targeted violence is the result of an understandable process of thinking and behavior
- Violence is the culmination of multiple factors that reflect problems, conflicts, disputes and failures
- Violence stems from an interaction between the potential attacker, past stressful events, a current situation, and the target
- The subject will display “attack-related” behaviors that move along a continuum of idea to action, including thinking, planning, and logistical preparation
  - Fein & Vossekuil (1998)

# Myths about Workplace Violence

Myth: Violent employees just “snap”

Reality: The violent act is the final action in an often long and drawn out conflict

Reality: Attacks are thought about and planned over time

# Myths about Workplace Violence

**Myth: Violent employees strike without warning or clues**

Reality: Potentially dangerous individuals present multiple clues to multiple people

Reality: Clues are not reported to appropriate individuals or entities

Reality: Clues are verbal statements, aggressive behaviors, obsessions, bizarre statements or actions

# Myths About Workplace Violence

Myth: Individuals are either dangerous or not dangerous

Reality: Individuals fall along a continuum of violence risk that can increase and decrease over time

# Myths about Workplace Violence

Myth: The workplace violence problem is all about homicide

Reality: The workplace violence problem is less about homicide and more about assaults, intimidation, and fear in the workplace which occur far more frequently

# Myths about Workplace Violence

Myth: Even if you can identify violent employees, nothing can be done

Reality: Team management works

- Achieve team agreement on a management plan
- Implement consistent communications to concerning employee
- Set and maintain clear boundaries for concerning employee

# Workplace Violence: Legal Issues

- Organizations have a “duty to provide a safe work environment” per the general duty clause (Fed-OSHA, 1970)
- Revised guidelines for workplace security now require that programs be in place to address workplace violence (OSHA, Division of Occupational Safety and Health, 1994/95)

# How Can Workplace Violence Manifest Itself?

- Threats (verbal/nonverbal/written)
- Violent Gestures/Intimidation
- Harassment
- Espionage
- Violent Acts at the Job Site
- Stalking
- Domestic Violence (Individuals will come to the workplace to “get at” their spouse/partner. Others become “collateral damage”)

# Workplace Violence: Warning Signs

## Verbal Clues:

- Direct and indirect threats
- Threatening/harassing phone calls
- Recurrent suicide threats or actions
- Hopelessness
- Boasts of violent behavior or fantasies
- Frequent profanity
- Belligerence
- Challenging or intimidating statements

# Workplace Violence: Warning Signs

## Physical Clues:

- Physical altercation/assault upon another person
- Inappropriate weapon possession or use
- Physical intimidation
- Following and surveilling targeted individuals
- Short-fused, loss of emotional control
- Destruction of property
- Deteriorating physical appearance and self-care
- Inappropriate displays of emotion
- Isolation and withdrawing
- Signs or history of substance use/abuse

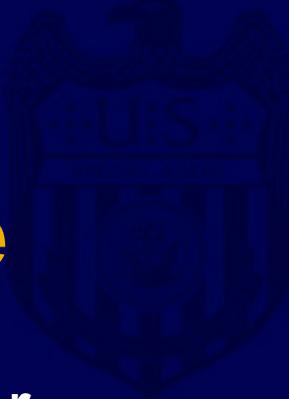
# Workplace Violence: Warning Signs

## Obsessions:

- Self as victim of a particular individual
- Grudges and deep resentments
- Particular object of desire
- Perceived injustices, humiliations, disrespect
- Narrow focus- “sees no way out”
- Publicized acts of violence
- Weapons and destruction
- Perceived unfairness
- Grievances and lawsuits

# Non-Verbal Communications Seen In Violent Individuals

- Certain non-verbal communications should be a matter of concern in the presence of these characteristics:
  - Exaggerated gestures
  - Shallow or rapid breathing
  - Clenched jaws or fists, pacing nervously
  - Sweating, shaking, trembling, red face
  - Staring intently or avoiding eye contact



## Signs of Diminished Attitude

- Increased frequency of aggressive acts or veiled/conditional threats
- Signs of impairment by drugs or alcohol
- Withdrawn, shows little initiative
- Deteriorating or strained relationships with co-workers
- Uncooperative or defensive; blames others for problems



## Signs of Diminished Attitude

- Difficulty in concentrating; lacks enthusiasm
- Increased forgetfulness
- Increasingly withdrawn from co-workers and friends
- Irritable or depressed

# The Path to Violence

- Individual experiences an event which creates extreme tension or anxiety:
  - Single major event (layoff or termination; actual or *perceived*)
  - Cumulative minor events
- Individual perceives that problems are essentially unsolvable
- Individual projects all responsibility onto the situation
- Violence is perceived as the only solution to the problem
- Individual prepares for the violent act
- Violent act is attempted or committed



# What can employees do?



**All indicators of potential violence in the workplace should be immediately brought to the attention of appropriate supervisors, human resources and/or security**

# DOCUMENT

- All interactions with the subject
- All reports on the subject
- Save all voicemails, emails, phone logs, other forms of communication, & documents



# What can management do?

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- Develop a workplace violence prevention policy
- Create and disseminate a policy to managers and employees that expressly disapproves of workplace violence, verbal and nonverbal threats, and related actions
- Take all violent and threatening incidents seriously, investigate them and contact NCIS when warranted; take appropriate corrective action
- Outline a comprehensive plan for maintaining security in the workplace
- Provide necessary authority and resources for staff to carry out violence prevention responsibilities

# What Can Management Do?

- Hold managers and employees accountable for their performance
- Institute procedures for prompt reporting and tracking of violent incidents that occur in and near the workplace
- Ensure that employees who report or experience workplace violence are not punished or otherwise suffer discrimination
- Work constructively with other parties such as local police, human resources, legal, public safety agencies to improve the security of all personnel



# Resources

- [www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence)
- [www.workplaceviolence911.com](http://www.workplaceviolence911.com)

# Conclusions

## If command has concern about an employee:

- Contact your local NCIS office
- Consider Employee Assistance Program
  - Have employee sign waiver so command may have access to EAP records
- Document & appropriately address all incidents



**Local NCIS Office;  
Yokosuka, Japan**

**Phone: 243-7535**