



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CEHR-D (690)

15 SEP 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR Commanders/Directors, USACE Commands

SUBJECT: Violence in the Workplace

1. It is my policy to promote a safe environment for all employees. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is committed to working with its employees to maintain a work environment free from violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior. While this kind of conduct is not pervasive within the Corps, no organization is immune. Every organization will be affected by disruptive behavior at one time or another.
2. Violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior in our workplace will not be tolerated. Individuals who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and may be subject to disciplinary action, criminal penalties, or both. All reports of incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately. Such behavior can include oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm.
3. I need your support to implement this policy effectively and to maintain a safe working environment. Commanders and directors should encourage immediate action in response to violent, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or other disruptive behavior. When such behavior is observed on Corps premises, employees should report it immediately to a supervisor or manager. Supervisors and managers who receive reports of violence in the workplace should be directed to seek advice from the local civilian personnel advisory center or office of security and law enforcement, as appropriate. Threats or assaults requiring immediate attention should be reported to security or the police first and then to the supervisor.
4. Commanders and directors will establish guidance and publish policy concerning violence in the workplace. Each activity will formally designate a threat management team and will use this team to assess potentially violent behavior and to assist the commander/director in managing threats. Experienced practitioners in this field strongly emphasize early intervention and thorough, well-documented investigations as proven methodologies in managing threats to the workplace. Any locally developed policy will require that all potential threats of violence are reported, investigated, documented, and that recommendations to management are made accordingly. Violence in the workplace awareness training for employees and supervisors will be conducted on a regular basis.

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5. Enclosed are suggested guidelines for establishing an effective violence in the workplace program and reasons why this is an important issue.
6. Memorandum, CEP, dated 6 March 1995, subject: Violence in the Workplace, is rescinded.

Encl



JOE N. BALLARD
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

INTRODUCTION

"Each employer shall furnish to each of its employees employment and a place of employment that is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to its employees."

*General Duty Clause of the Occupational
Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)*

Violence in the workplace concerns everyone - employees, supervisors, managers, contractors, civilians and soldiers - as well as their families and loved ones. It is a growing phenomenon and a high-visibility issue which continues to receive a great deal of publicity and media attention. Preventing and dealing with workplace violence is receiving significant attention and emphasis from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, and from the Command and Senior Leadership of HQ USACE.

The definition of Violence in the Workplace is any behavior which can be interpreted by a reasonable person to communicate a direct, indirect or potential threat to others. These behaviors cover a broad spectrum from physical and verbal aggression to written gestures.

The goal of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Violence in the Workplace Program is to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace through a combination of awareness, training and employee support services, and open communication between employees and supervisors/managers as well as between civilian employees and soldiers. Success in the protection of our employees and soldiers requires your personal attention and, as necessary, appropriate action.

The purpose of this document is to provide you with a concise reference which constitutes the Violence in the Workplace Program. It details signs to watch for and describes how to report violence related threats and incidents.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Short temper/anger
- Growing frustration with/on the job
- Severe mood swings
- Comments about worthlessness of and/or harming self (or others)
- Withdrawal from other employees and/or office activities
- Carelessness or an "I don't give a (expletive) attitude"
- Aggressive or defensive behavior
- Negative changes in performance or conduct for which there is seemingly no explanation
- Unexplained absenteeism
- KEY: Employees feel uncomfortable/concerned or are wary or fearful of the individual

CAUTIONARY NOTE: A history of previous psychotherapy or treatment does not necessarily indicate, in and of itself, a potential for violence.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

The following actions should be taken immediately if violent or disruptive behavior is occurring:

INITIAL/ON-SITE ACTION:

- Contact the building's guard desk OR security office immediately
 - Briefly describe:

WHAT is happening and

WHERE it is happening.
- Let them know if Emergency Medical Assistance appears necessary.
- Attempt to clear the immediate area of anyone not directly involved in the incident.
- If possible, separate the people involved, but **DO NOT** - under any circumstances - expose yourself or others to risk of harm or injury.
- Send someone to the building entrance, stairwell, or elevator to direct to the scene those responding to the incident.
- Contact the CPAC as soon as possible or ask someone in a nearby office to do so.

THREAT MANAGEMENT TEAM (TMT)

The TMT should include members from:

- Office of Security and Law Enforcement
(CHAIR)
- Guard Force
- Employee Assistance Program
- Civilian Personnel Advisory Center
- Office of Counsel
- Office of Equal Employment Opportunity
- Office of Public Affairs
- Safety and Occupational Health Office
- Building Operations Management Office
- Employee Union(s) Representative(s)
- Occupational Health Nurse

TMT PREVENTION PROGRAM

Establishment of a Violence in the Workplace TMT is a critical tool in preventing violence in the workforce. The TMT should report directly to the local commander.

The mission of the TMT include serving as a "threat assessment" team, developing strategies and executing plans to identify situations and conditions in the workplace conducive to violence and resolving, correcting, and/or eliminating them to reduce the possibility of violence. TMT will ensure supervisors and employees receive appropriate training and will investigate and assess all incidents of harassment, threats, or acts of violence.

The TMT will help foster increased employee awareness of anti-violence issues and initiatives. It will be instrumental in establishing a state of preparedness to respond to actual and potential threats to employee safety and to help all Corps employees learn to recognize and properly manage potentially dangerous situations.

The TMT will coordinate the efforts of the Corps organizational support service programs relative to anti-violence issues.

The primary objectives of the Violence in the Workplace Prevention Program are:

- Reduce the FREQUENCY
- Reduce the SERIOUSNESS
- Reduce the IMPACT

of violence in the workplace.

PREVENTION PROGRAM

ROLE OF THE TMT

The primary role of the TMT is to assess potentially violent situations in the workplace and to develop an action plan to address the situation. The step-by-step process for this is as follows:

a. Immediately upon receiving a report of workplace violence from a supervisor, the Security and Law Enforcement Officer should notify the local commander. Together they will assess preliminary information to determine if further action is necessary. If an event is likely to generate media attention, the PAO should be notified.

b. The TMT will be activated, if deemed necessary, to assess the situation.

c. The TMT will recommend a plan of action based upon relevant factors, including evidence of how the employee typically responds to stress.

d. A TMT team member in conjunction with the CPAC, the supervisor and the union will interview the employee, if warranted. Security and Law Enforcement will coordinate with appropriate protective agencies to provide security if it is believed the employee will become enraged. Security officers must be experienced and trained to handle the situation. Calm, low-key, security individuals who do not project a threatening manner are recommended. Their behavior should not precipitate an incident of violence.

e. The TMT will make a recommendation regarding the employee's duty status until final disposition is reached.

f. The TMT will determine if the employee is a threat to self or others. If the employee is determined not to be an immediate threat, the TMT will consider a referral for counseling and/or other appropriate action.

g. If the TMT decides the individual is an immediate danger to self or others, actions may include referral to law enforcement agencies, obtaining a temporary restraining order or implementing security plans.

h. The TMT will provide for appropriate feedback and support to the victims and/or targets. The TMT will continue to monitor the situation through resolution.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TMT

The Threat Management Team is identified below. They assume the following responsibilities:

- a. Office of Security and Law Enforcement. Chairs the TMT.
 - Coordinates overall Corps response to incident(s) of workplace violence.
 - Advises the TMT on security clearances, building access and physical security.
- b. Guard Force.
 - Upon notification of a potential/actual problem, the guard force will perform initial information collection concerning the complaint.
 - The guards will notify DPS when appropriate.
- c. Employee Assistance Program Representative.
 - Coordinates/provides delivery of professional EAP services, to include but not limited to crisis intervention, counseling, referral treatment and follow-up.
- d. Civilian Personnel Advisor Center Chief.
 - Serves as advisor to TMT.
 - Advises the TMT on MER issues.
- e. EEO Representative.
 - Serves as advisor to TMT. Alerts the team of decisions which have the propensity to cause employees the kind of stress which could result in a disruptive situation.
 - Provides feedback to the TMT on the current command climate and sources of tension.
- f. PAO Officer.
 - Advises the commander on public affairs issues related to violence in the workplace. Also advises what information should be released to the media in the event there is a crisis.
 - Keeps employees informed during and after an incident, as needed.
- g. Safety Officer.
 - Assists in assessing the physical and social environment for potential negative and positive stressors (e.g., space, lighting, temperature and noise level).
- h. Building Operations Management Office Representative.
 - Serves as advisor to TMT.

- i. Union Representative.
 - Serves as advisor to TMT and as liaison between management and employees.

- j. Office of Counsel Representative.
 - Provides legal advice and support to TMT and supervisors.

- k. Occupational Health Nurse.
 - Provides medical assistance in the event of a crisis.
 - Coordinates medical training (CPR) for employees as well as special topic briefings.

HARASSING/ABUSIVE CALLS

1. Hang up at once! Wait at least 20 seconds before placing a call. This allows the telephone company's equipment to disconnect the caller even if the caller does not hang up.
2. Never give any information, such as your name and address, to unknown callers. Teach all members of the staff to do the same.
3. If calls continue, talk to your supervisor about the problem. Call the guards and make a report. Have the guards notify the DPS.
4. Together, the supervisor and the employee must decide if the employee needs to be moved. If the employee's duties include answering the phone, the telephone services representative may consider transferring the affected phone line to IM Caller ID Services.
5. When the identity of the caller is known, take legal action. Consult counsel and security.

BOMB THREAT

1. Keep calm.
2. Use a prearranged "danger signal" that notifies a co-worker to listen to the call as well.
3. Keep the caller on the line as long as possible to gather information on voice characteristics, nature of the problem, familiarity with the facility, people mentioned, etc.
4. Write down every word of the threat.
5. Ask for the location of the bomb and what time it is set to go off.
6. Be alert to the caller's voice and all background noises you hear from the caller's end of the line.
7. Report the call immediately to the guards and/or the Security and Law Enforcement Officer.

SAFETY AT WORK

Here are a few suggestions for keeping yourself safe at work:

- Have the phone number for security near the phone in your work area.
- Develop a "danger signal" for use with co-workers.
- Promptly notify your supervisor of potentially violent situations.
- Stay away from potentially violent co-workers.
- Be aware of floor exits/stairwells.
- Conduct emergency drills with your co-workers.

SAFETY WHEN WORKING AT NIGHT

- Inform security or some one that you are going to work late.
Always let them know when you expect to leave.
- Lock your office door while you work.
- If you drive your own car, park in a well-lit area or near your work entrance if possible.
- Before you leave ask a security guard or co-worker to escort you to your car.
- Have your keys ready as you leave the building.
- Before unloading or entering your car, check the back seat and the floor.
- Lock the door as soon as you are seated behind the wheel - before you fasten your seat belt.
- If you use public transportation, check the schedule to be sure there will be a service when you need it.
- If possible, walk to the stop with a co-worker or arrange for a ride.
- When taking public transportation, sit next to the driver/conductor.

IF YOU ARE THREATENED AT WORK

You can't always prevent an attack. To reduce your risk, follow these suggestions:

- Don't panic. Think and size up the situation.
- Call the building guards if there is time.
- Use a prearranged "danger-signal" with co-workers.
- Try to remain in control of the situation. Keep direct eye contact with the possible attacker.
- If you get a chance to run, do so.
- Report the incident to your supervisor and CPAC.

If you know that a person is coming to attack you:

- Notify the guards. They may be able to prevent his entry into your area.
- Tell your supervisor. The supervisor may consider moving you out of the area until the situation is defused.

IF YOU ARE TAKEN HOSTAGE

- Remain calm, speak clearly, don't raise your voice, avoid arguing.
- Be compliant but don't commit crimes if requested.
- Follow the instructions of the negotiators once they arrive on the scene.

IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED

- Contact someone from the CPAC if the aggressor works for the Corps.
- Contact law enforcement to file a complaint.
- Consider a restraining order.
- Contact the Security Guards and provide them with a description or photograph.
- Consider purchasing a cellular phone.
- Talk with your supervisor and telephone representative about transferring the affected phone line to IM Caller ID services.
- Talk to your supervisor about moving you to a remote part of the office for security purposes and/or altering your work schedule.
- Periodically alter your route to and from work as well as your time of departure.
- Always let someone know where you are going and when to expect you.

HANDLING PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

The following is information about what actions can be taken against the aggressor once violence has occurred.

Employees who make threats and harass are asking for attention - give it. The supervisor is responsible for formulating the best course of action and the time for implementation as related to a violent employee. The supervisor is responsible for coordinating the action with the TMT. The TMT will provide advice and recommendations as to counseling and problem resolution for both the victim and the attacker to prevent further conflicts. All actions should be directed at ensuring a healthy and productive work environment. Since each situation is unique, the course of action should be tailored according to the specific circumstances.

Immediately after an incident, one recommended approach is to relieve the attacker from their duties. This may be done, depending on the circumstances, before interviewing that employee. A "time out" allows for cooling of tempers and easing of tensions. If law enforcement personnel are on the scene, employees will comply with their directives. If there are no law enforcement personnel, then the supervisor may relieve the person from their duties with pay to avoid escalating the situation. Any adverse personnel action taken against the attacker may be proposed and decided at a later date.

Corrective disciplinary action should be considered when there has been an incident of disruptive or violent behavior. The message must be communicated to the alleged attacker and other employees that such behavior will not be tolerated because safety is critical to the organization.

Employees engaged in violent or disruptive behavior may be denied access to the building. When this determination is made, all access devices - badges, keys, passwords, etc - must be returned to the organization or rendered ineffective. In the event the behavior is criminal there may be investigations by other law enforcement agencies and prosecution may result.

AVOIDING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS. Before hiring someone into the organization, be sure they "check out." Work with the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) to ensure pre-employment screening (such as records checks and security clearance updates) has been completed with satisfactory results. Supervisors are responsible for conducting reference checks by contacting the employee's current and former supervisors. These discussions should not only focus on the technical abilities of the prospective employee but also on their work relationships, problem solving abilities, and their ability to work under stressful situations or sub-optimum conditions.

OPEN COMMUNICATION. The importance of keeping open the lines of communication between employees and their supervisors/managers cannot be overemphasized. Leaders, supervisors and managers - as representatives of the employer - play a critical part in reducing the risk of violence/unacceptable behavior and protecting the workforce through open communications. Employees must be able to air concerns, problems, and grievances and to report threats, coercion, intimidation, or potential violent activity to/through the supervisory chain. Employees must also feel reasonably certain that those in the supervisory chain will be open and receptive to such "upward" communication. Open communication can only succeed in an environment free of reprisal or ridicule. Reduced stress levels and a more contented workforce are generally beneficial side-effects of an environment which fosters open communication.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT SERVICES. A variety of Corps resources are available to assist employees and soldiers in dealing with problems originating in or being brought to the workplace. Employees should begin by contacting their supervisors, the CPAC or civilian counseling services.

TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION. The problem should be handled at the lowest level before it escalates. All employees must know that violence in the workplace will not be tolerated.

SUGGESTED LIST OF EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Human Resources
- Security and Law Enforcement
- Guard Desk
- Safety Office
- Health Nurse