

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Managing risk in the workplace.

Objectives:

- A. Define “workplace violence.”
- B. Describe factors that put teenagers at risk for violence on the job.
- C. Describe prevention strategies an employer may use to reduce risk of violence in the workplace.

MODULE 5B: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the following information sheet and then complete the student activities at the end of this module.

Introduction

“No arrests yet in attack on Pizza Hut Manager,” read the headline in a local newspaper. “A Pizza Hut manager was walking through the parking lot about 10:20 p.m. when he was approached by a man with a knife. The robber demanded the restaurant’s bank deposit money from the day and the manager’s wallet. But there was no deposit to be made and the manager only had \$19 in his wallet. The robber punched the manager in the face several times, leaving him with a swollen eye, split lip, and at least one loose tooth.”

“Taco Bell robbed” read another headline. “At 2:30 a.m. a robbery suspect pulled a handgun on an assistant manager, trapped him in the walk-in freezer, stole \$2,263 in cash, and smashed a surveillance videotape camera.”

Recently, violence in the workplace has received considerable attention in the popular press and among safety and health professionals. Much of the reason for this attention is the reporting of data by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and other organizations regarding the magnitude of this problem in U.S. workplaces.

Why should we discuss workplace violence? Violence is a substantial contributor to occupational injury and death, and homicide has become the second leading cause of occupational injury death. Each week, an average of 20 workers are murdered and 18,000 are assaulted while at work or on duty. The majority of these murders are robbery-related crimes. In addition, an estimated 1 million

workers are assaulted annually in U.S. workplaces. Nonfatal assaults result in millions of lost workdays and cost workers millions of dollars in lost wages.

The information in this module will focus on workplace violence and the safety measures companies employ to protect their workers. Although no single strategy will ever be appropriate for all workplaces, employers and employees must begin to change the way work is done in certain settings to minimize or remove the risk of workplace violence. Employers must change the way they think about workplace violence and shift from a reactionary approach to prevention, and acknowledge that workplace violence is an occupational safety and health issue.

After reading this module you should be able to:

- Define workplace violence.
- Identify occupations where workplace violence is clustered.
- Identify factors that increase the risk for workplace violence against teenagers.
- List and describe methods to minimize the risk of violence in the workplace.

What is workplace violence?

When we discuss “safety in the workplace” we immediately think of injuries from such hazards as falls, burns, cuts, etc. Workplace violence can be defined as *violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed toward persons at work or on duty*. The basic categories of workplace violence include:

- Robbery-associated violence
- Violence by disgruntled clients, customers, patients, etc.
- Violence by coworkers, employees, or employers
- Domestic violence that finds its way into the workplace

Workplace violence is clustered in certain occupational settings: For example, the retail trade and service industries account for more than half of workplace homicides and 85% of nonfatal workplace assaults. Taxicab drivers have the highest risk of workplace homicides of any occupational group. Workers in health care, community services, and retail settings are at increased risk of nonfatal assaults. As the U.S. economy continues to shift toward the service sectors, fatal and nonfatal workplace violence will be an increasingly important occupational safety and health issue.

Risk factors for teens

According to NIOSH, 87% of working teenagers, ages 15-17, work in retail establishments (grocery stores, restaurants, and other retail stores) and in service-related occupations (healthcare facilities and recreation jobs). Because many young people work in these types of jobs and, that workplace violence tends to be

clustered in these areas, teenagers are at an increased risk for workplace violence. The specific risk factors are as follows:

- Interacting with the public
- Exchanging money
- Delivering passengers, goods, or services
- Working late at night or early in the morning
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working with unstable or volatile people in healthcare, social service, or criminal justice settings
- Working in a community-based setting
- Working in high crime areas
- Guarding valuable property or possessions

Prevention strategies

Environmental Designs

- Implement cash-handling policies in retail settings such as using locked drop safes, carrying small amounts of cash, conducting regular cash “sweeps” of register drawers, and posting signs and printing notices that limited cash is available or exact change or credit/debit only transactions are accepted. It may also be useful to explore the feasibility of cashless transactions in retail settings through the use of machines that accommodate automatic teller account cards or debit cards.
- Physical separation of workers from customers, clients, and the general public through the use of bullet-resistant barriers or enclosures is used for retail settings such as gas stations and convenience stores, hospital emergency rooms, and ticket counters at movie theaters and sporting arenas. The height and depth of counters (with or without bullet-resistant barriers) are also important considerations in protecting workers, since they introduce physical distance between workers and potential attackers.
- Visibility and lighting are also important environmental design considerations. Make high-risk areas visible to more people and install good external lighting.
- Consider the number of entrances and exits to a building, the ease with which non-employees can gain access to work areas because doors are unlocked or propped open, and the number of areas where potential attackers can hide.
- Security devices may reduce the risk for assaults against workers and facilitate the identification and apprehension of perpetrators. Examples include closed-circuit cameras, alarms, two-way mirrors, card-key access systems, and panic-bar doors locked from the outside only.

Administrative Controls

- Increasing the number of staff on duty may be appropriate in any number of service and retail settings. Work practices and staffing patterns during the opening and closing of establishments and during money drops and pickups should be carefully reviewed as are times when workers take out garbage, dispose of grease, store food or other items in external storage areas, transport or store money, and clock out at the end of a shift. Security experts have also suggested the use of security guards or receptionists to screen persons entering the workplace and controlling access to actual work areas.
- Policies and procedures for assessing and reporting threats allow employers to track and assess the potential for workplace violence. Policies should clearly indicate a zero tolerance of workplace violence and provide mechanisms by which incidents can be reported and handled. These policies should also include guidance on recognizing the potential for violence, methods for defusing or de-escalating potentially violent situations, and instruction about the use of security devices and protective equipment. Procedures for obtaining medical care and psychological support following violent incidents should also be addressed. Training and education efforts are clearly needed to accompany such policies.

Behavioral Strategies

- Training employees in nonviolent response and conflict resolution has been suggested to reduce the risk of volatile situations escalating to physical violence. To increase compliance with stated violence prevention policies, training should emphasize the appropriate use and maintenance of protective equipment, adherence to administrative policies, and increased knowledge and awareness of the risk of workplace violence.
- A workplace violence prevention program should include a system for documenting incidents, procedures to be taken in the event of incidents, and open communication between employers and workers.

CORPORATE SAFETY PRACTICES IN ACTION

SHEETZ CORPORATION

Company Profile:

50 years old – Convenience Store

Privately held, family-owned

Corporate office located in Altoonah, PA

300 stores in 6 states

2.8 billion in sales

10,000 employees – 50% Full-time – 50% Part-time

Full-time employees work at least 32 hours and receive full benefits after 90 days

Part-time employees may receive full benefits after 2 years

Health benefits = 70% employer paid and 30% employee paid

Attendance points-based system in order to earn paid time off

Career ladder = Associate > Shift Supervisor > Assistant Manager > Store Manager

75% managers are promoted from within

New employee training = 53 hours computer-based and on-the-job

Corporate Safety Practices:

- 2 associates minimum scheduled each shift – 1 is a supervisor
- Windows not blocked with product – good visibility into and out of the store
- Well lit inside and out
- White and red colors used for the building – very bright
- Concrete parking lots – reflect light better
- In-house security guards visits stores
- Confidential help line for associates
- Safety/security manuals & check sheets before each shift
- Ongoing Safety Training Programs
- Security and safety posters prominently displayed
- Security systems--cameras, 2-way communication systems, silent alarms, security pendant tied to 24-hour store surveillance
- Crisis management plans/teams
- Survey associates twice a year
- Complimentary coffee to police
- Internal audits where liquor is sold
- Suspected shoplifting > call police

Results

- Robberies and assaults reduced
 - Employee turnover reduced
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MODULE 5B: STUDENT ACTIVITIES

TO THE STUDENT: After reading and studying the information sheet, complete the following activities.

Activity 1: Answer the following questions.

1. Define workplace violence.
2. List the four (4) basic categories of workplace violence.
3. List three (3) occupations where there is a higher incidence of workplace violence.
4. What are five (5) factors that put teenagers at risk for violence on-the-job?
5. Describe five (5) prevention strategies employer use to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace.

MODULE 5B: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work**13.2.11. Career Acquisition (Getting a Job)**

- E. Demonstrate, in the career acquisition process, the application of essential workplace skills/knowledge, such as, but not limited to:
- Commitment
 - Communication
 - Dependability
 - Health/safety
 - Laws and regulations (i.e. Child Labor Law, Fair Labor Standards Act, OSHA, Material Safety Data Sheets)
 - Personal initiative
 - Scheduling/time management
 - Team building
 - Technical literacy
 - Technology

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

1.5.11. Quality of Writing

- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
 - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
 - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).