

Safety Note #107

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION



Workplace violence may occur against property or between co-workers, employees and supervisors, and employees and visitors, students, or other individuals. Factors that contribute to workplace violence may be attributed to problems or situations encountered within the workplace environment or personal problems that employees are encountering outside the workplace. It is critical for supervisors and employees to be aware of potential hostile work areas, set and enforce workplace standards of conduct, identify causes of stress or conflict, and communicate openly to resolve issues and differences of opinion and thereby, arrive at solutions that prevent workplace violence.

Awareness of Potential Hostile Workplaces and Areas

Employees shall be aware of potential hostile workplaces or areas and take appropriate precautions to avoid problems or situations where violence may be fostered.

- If possible, avoid working alone or late at night or early in the morning in known or suspected areas of high crime.
- Good safety practice dictates that a mobile communication device should be available when working or traveling alone.
- It is prudent practice in urban areas to work where other people are present and there is good visibility and sufficient street lighting.
- When working in known or suspected areas of high crime avoid wearing expensive jewelry or clothes, carrying large amounts of cash, and using expensive electronic devices.
- If your principal workplace is located in either an isolated or urban area, it is prudent practice to assure entrances and exits are secured from entry by unauthorized individuals.

Workplace Violence Indicators

When the following types of behaviors and attitudes form a pattern, they are often cited as indicators for employee workplace violence:

- Chronic disagreements with co-workers, visitors, students, supervisors, or other individuals.
- Significant short-term changes in demeanor or appearance.
- Being verbally abusive, threatening, harassing, or intimidating toward others.
- Consistently challenges or resists authority, harbors grudges, directs blame for faulty work product(s) elsewhere, and seeks revenge for perceived wrongs.
- Has known physical, mental health, relationship, drug or alcohol abuse, and/or financial problem(s).
- Repetitive loss of temper, including shouting, using profanity, and making threatening gestures such as raising a fist or pointing a finger in another person's face.
- Has a history of being reprimanded or arrested for violent acts within (or outside) the workplace, including threatening a specific act of violence.

Preventing Workplace Violence

Preventing workplace violence encompasses not only avoiding workplaces or areas and situations that are potentially hostile and prone to violence, but also recognizing and reporting to a supervisor an observed pattern of employee workplace violence indicators.

Additional information about workplace violence is given in Safety Note [#106 Workplace Violence Awareness](#) and Safety Note [#108 Workplace Violence Response](#). Videos, entitled "Violence in the Workplace" (E-055) and "Workplace Violence for Management," (E-057) are also available for loan from the ANR Environmental Health & Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.