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# **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE: RISK-ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION**

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Nearly two million American workers report having been victims of workplace violence each year, though many more cases go unreported. However, if employers take appropriate precautions, the risk of assault can be minimized or eliminated.

Workplace violence is defined by the United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety & Health Administration as "any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site." This may include conduct ranging from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults or even homicide.

Some factors that may increase the risk of violence include 1) whether money is exchanged with the public; 2) whether employees work alone or in isolated areas; 3) whether services are provided to the public; 4) whether alcohol is served at or near the workplace; 5) whether the workplace is located in a high-crime area; and 6) whether employees work at night. Workers who exchange money with the public, delivery drivers, healthcare professionals, public service workers, customer service agents, law enforcement personnel, and those who work alone or in small groups are among those with higher risks of being involved in a workplace violence incident.

Employers should assess their worksites and identify methods for reducing the likelihood of such incidents. One of the best protections employers can offer their workers is an established zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence. This policy should cover all workers, clients, visitors, and anyone else who may come in contact with company personnel. A well-written and implemented Workplace Violence Prevention Program, combined with administrative controls and training, can help reduce the number and severity of incidents of workplace violence in both private and public sector workplaces.

For a Workplace Violence Prevention Program to be effective, it is critical for employers to ensure that all workers know the policy and understand that all claims of workplace violence will be investigated and remedied promptly and effectively. Employers should also develop additional methods to protect employees in particularly high-risk industries.

For more information regarding workplace violence, visit <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/index.html>. For particular recommendations for Workplace Violence Prevention Programs tailored to late-night retail establishments, visit <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3153.pdf>.