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Safety

Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.

Albert Einstein, scientist

In most organizations, the responsibility for the safety function rests on the shoulders of the security director. This is a logical fit because Security and Safety are very similar jobs. Security's function is to protect assets and Safety protects the two most important assets: guests and employees. Actually, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)—the primary safety regulating agency—exists to protect employees, not guests. Fire departments and other business codes protect all occupants, including guests. It is good business—and to everyone's benefit—if you apply all safety-related programs to guests and employees.

Whether the safety responsibility is yours or under the umbrella of another department, you can still work very closely with that other department toward the common goal of protecting employees and guests.

PROGRAM

In most cases, the government requires you to have a safety program in place. You will find that if you do certain things, you will exceed the level of being compliant. Because some safety codes and regulations differ by jurisdiction, this chapter will address the general setup and organization of a good safety program.

The program consists of four components: compliance, awareness, training, and communication.

Compliance

The safety manager is responsible for tracking regulations, codes, and recommendations and applying them to the operation of the company through the establishment of policies. The safety manager is also responsible for coordinating outside and internal inspections.

In most court cases, the plaintiff (usually the guest who slipped and fell) has to prove that the defendant (the company and its employees) knew about the hazard and failed to act or that they should have known and had time to clean or repair the hazard. On one extreme, a guest who spills his drink in front of another guest who slips and falls is an example of a case the company could win. It is not reasonable in that case for the company to be held liable because there was no time for them to be aware of the hazard or to clean it before the accident occurred. The other extreme is when a guest spills a drink on a main pathway and it remains there a very long time before someone slips and falls. The company should have known of the spill through regular patrol and activity and should have cleaned the spill to prevent accidents.

Most facility managers realize it is much easier to find hazards and correct them than it is to defend their procedures in court. Every employee should receive training on being aware of spills and other hazards and taking action to clean them immediately. Some facilities have clean-up stations throughout the property. Others use regular documented patrols by certain departments to look for and correct hazards. One famous retailer makes regular announcements over its public address system that “it’s time for a safety sweep.”

Outside inspections are those made by a government or regulatory agency not affiliated with the company. Inspections you may see in a hotel on a regular basis are Fire, Health, OSHA, and others depending on the jurisdiction. Private insurance companies generally inspect their client properties as well. The safety manager should accompany inspectors to take note of violations or recommendations and explain dubious practices or equipment. The safety manager will communicate these exceptions to the correcting department, and document the infractions that may require a policy change or employee corrective action.

Internal inspections are those that you establish or possibly those made by a corporate entity. If you belong to a chain of hotels, corporate may have its own inspectors to see that you are complying with corporate policy and protecting the brand.

Awareness

The safety manager’s job should be focused on employee involvement. It is not feasible for you to be responsible for the safety of the entire property. Instead, you should coordinate the efforts of all employees to be aware and focused on safety. There are several traditional methods of coordinating the employees and some less traditional ones.

Safety Committee

We all know that if you simply write memos and manuals and pass down information, there will be no buy-in and little or no compliance. You need to get the stakeholders—which are all of the employees—involved in the process. Safety committees are mistakenly believed by many to be an OSHA requirement. OSHA cares less how you achieve safety and more with the result. A cross section of employees is a good way to get a safety committee started.

So, what is your biggest exposure to loss? A car stolen out of valet? Maybe a robbery of the day's receipts? Try this: In 2007, a truck driver was delivering a load of food to a retail store that had a deli. The store's grease interceptor clogged causing a slippery grease spill on the loading ramp. The truck driver slipped and suffered serious spinal injuries. She was awarded over \$15 million for her fall.

Every employee has a responsibility for safety. Many stores and hospitality environments maintain very strong safety programs for this reason. Spill stations, wet floor signs, immediate reporting procedures, and equipment inspection programs could have prevented this fall and this huge loss to the store and the driver.

Set a monthly meeting date with an agenda. The agenda should include a review of inspections (discussed later), new safety rules, safety suggestions, and a review of accidents or noted safety violations. Allow the committee to discuss safety suggestions that will benefit employees and reduce accidents; for example, a suggested covering for a slick walkway to avoid slip and falls.

Safety committee members will be responsible for bringing forward information from their departments, suggestions from themselves and other employees and taking this information back to their department meetings. Many consider this topic dry and send their least energetic employees. It is up to you to make the format interesting and relevant. Show the cost of accidents for the company. Pass around photos and evidence that makes the accident personal. Show the employees the effects of their recommendations and how they have prevented accidents. Prizes and awards for great suggestions or cost savings is an inexpensive motivator.

Consider bringing guest speakers like the fire marshal to speak to the committee about safety hazards and life-threatening safety problems he has seen. This goes toward that networking skill we develop and discuss further in Chapter 12.

Departmental Inspections

As I said before, the safety manager cannot do it all and would not be effective if he did. Let the employees have some empowerment over their own work area. Create an inspection form for each area so that any employee can do a regular walk-through and look for daisy-chained power strips, blocked fire exits, supplies stacked too high on shelves, etc. This provides a preinspection for officials, but more importantly, brings the awareness to the inspecting employees and all of their colleagues. These inspection forms are brought to the safety meeting and exceptions are discussed with the group to make changes.

Training

Some training is safety related for almost every department. Since this training is subject to verification by regulatory agencies, the safety manager should coordinate it. Security is one department that has a lot of safety training, like CPR. Your facilities department has even more safety training. Lockout, tag-out, welding, safety harness, and CPR are some

of the classes required for your engineers. Depending on how many employees you have, this can be quite a job for you. Most managers find it easier to set up a matrix of required classes and schedule them over the year, spread out so the training is constant, but not a burden on the workforce of that department.

In early 2008, an outside contractor was hired to build a steel catwalk on the roof of the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas. During the welding, a spark landed on the exterior foam facade of the structure. The foam, which is highly flammable, was a popular product used to create different textures and shapes on most hotels in that area. The resulting fire was mostly contained to the roof, but damaged the 32nd floor suites and caused evacuation of the entire building. Costs of repair and loss of revenue were reported at over \$100 million.

OSHA requires that nonmovable flammable structures be protected against sparks and flame during any hot work, including welding. As you might imagine, several persons and entities would be blamed for the cause of this fire.

You may be tempted to learn each of these training programs yourself and to do all of the training alone. As admirable as this is, it is not fair to the company. If something happens to you, the company will be stuck without a trainer. Spread this training over the employees who need to learn it. Have the welder teach the hot work safety class, the fountain maintenance person teach the SCUBA class, and so forth. If someone leaves, you just have to worry about that one person and that one class. Keep in mind that many agencies and even your own insurance providers provide many classes for free.

Communication

Safety policies and procedures are worthless without a way to communicate them to the entire staff and sometimes guests. The Safety Committee is just one form of communication; here are some others.

Safety Newsletter

A safety newsletter can be a very informative way to get employees involved in safety. There is never a shortage of information that can be included in a monthly or quarterly communication. Many of the items discussed in the safety meetings can be included. Here is a list of other ideas for content:

1. Safety suggestions and rewards
2. Safety tips for employees
3. Department of the month
4. Safety tips for employees at home (weather, robbery, disaster, etc.)
5. Monthly themes for the property (October is Fire Prevention week)
6. Games that highlight safety
7. Photos of safety hazards

8. Articles from guest writers (fire chief, company doctor)
9. Safety training and class schedule

Safety Wall

At least one display or bulletin board in employee areas should be devoted to safety. Items from the safety committee and from the newsletter can be included with training class information and a place to receive suggestions.

Safety Suggestions

If given an opportunity to submit privately, many employees will be motivated to become engaged in safety in their own manner. A traditional suggestion box is just one way to encourage suggestions. Perhaps a page on the company website or a safety phone hotline will get people to become involved.

Insurance Company

Your workers' comp, business, or general liability insurance companies may be willing to provide training classes or written material, posters, and presentations on the subject of safety. Anything to make the employee more involved is of help.

Workers' Comp

We sometimes are so caught up in compliance that we forget that the objective of a safety program is to reduce accidents. I hope that you can achieve compliance while promoting safety, but the follow-up with accidents at your property is usually the forgotten step.

Workers' Compensation is simply an insurance program for employees injured at work. Sometimes it is administered by the state, but usually there is a third-party administrator or insurance company to pay medical bills and compensate for lost work time. Most hotels have a claims administrator to act as the liaison between the employees and the insurance company. This position probably falls under your Human Resources department or benefits, but there is a close relationship with the safety coordinator.

The first part of this chapter discussed prevention programs. In this next section, we will look at how accidents and claims are used as metrics for the success of the safety program.

ACCIDENTS

If not already done, there should be some level of investigation for every employee accident. This process is discussed in Chapter 11. The report should include the supervisor's statement, which answers the following questions regarding the employee's actions leading up to the accident. Has this type of accident happened before? Was the employee acting in the normal course of his or her duties? Were any policies or safety procedures violated while performing the task? Was personal protective equipment used correctly? Was other equipment used correctly? How could this accident have been prevented? Has this employee been involved in any other accident reports?

The report should also include a statement by the Engineering Department, which answers similar questions and information regarding the accident scene: hazards noted, equipment operating properly, measures that might have prevented accident, etc. Witnesses, photos, and other evidence should be included as well.

Once the report has been completed, it should be reviewed by the safety manager or coordinator. She should review all the facts to determine what action should be taken. Possible action steps include: disciplinary action against the employee for abuse of safety practices or other policies (i.e., running in the hallway); repair order for damaged or faulty equipment (i.e., loose handrail); recommendation to management for safety upgrade (i.e., replace tile floor with nonslip tiles); or recommendation for new safety procedure (i.e., carts must be pushed and not pulled).

The safety manager or, better yet, the safety team should review all accident reports (omitting personal medical information) to look for trends that might indicate a safety issue. For example, several employees have slipped in the same spot in a certain area of the kitchen. The team then comes up with recommendations where applicable, such as ergonomic training, better lighting, different flooring surface, spill stations, etc.

Other factors may lead to rises in accident reports. Some employees fake or exaggerate accidents just to get off on a busy weekend, hoping they will be paid for their time. There may be attention-getting reasons or contention with a supervisor or co-worker. The most serious reason may be insurance fraud. It is not uncommon for an employee with a chronic back or knee problem to fake an accident so he can get the needed surgery and time missed covered by the company. A good investigator should reveal these, but the safety team should be aware that no matter how good the safety program is, something like the previous examples could still lead to issues.

Your claims administrator, in an effort to reduce costs, will be very aggressive with return-to-work programs. Most employees would rather work their regular job than peel carrots or fold towels on light duty.

Documentation

OSHA requires certain reporting of accidents and other statistics related to safety. If you are tracking accidents as described previously, this should be no problem. You will not be able to accurately measure the success of your safety program unless you are tracking these incidents. Do not even think of covering up accidents or falsifying the numbers. Smaller companies do that to fly under the inspection radar, but you do not need to do that. You will not have an inordinate amount of accidents if you have a program in place, and your company would not have you in your position if it wanted to keep this information from the government.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Somewhere along the line, safety programs were tied in to risk management in hospitality venues. When you look at a brief history of guest accidents, hotels were not a very lucrative defendant for most plaintiff lawyers through the 1970s. While hotels had relatively deep

pockets, accident claims were considered more of the bottom of the barrel for trial lawyers, so they were left for the struggling law firms. Insurance covered most of these cases. In the 1980s, mega resorts like the ones in Las Vegas, amusement parks, and overseas monstrosities came on the scene. With these huge facilities came more escalators, elevators, marble (slippery) floors, and the proportional increase in accidents. However, these large corporations also brought highly paid and experienced lawyers, modern video surveillance systems, and increased staff training to monitor and reduce accidents. Most importantly, the insurance deductibles for large facilities are now in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Entire departments were devoted to the settling of accident and criminal claims.

The down economy has affected law firms as it has everyone else, and they too are struggling for business. So, now we are seeing expensive, aggressive, and successful lawyers come after hotels for accidents that were settled relatively inexpensively before.

The moral of this history lesson (subjective as it is) is that the hospitality industry is back in the “deep pockets” category and we are up against a better adversary. We have more cases and most fall under our deductible. This makes our safety program one that is not only for compliance, but also for reduction and defense of risk. Some examples of safety programs or policies that reduce risk are discussed next.

Note: Of course, just about every policy mentioned in this book is designed to reduce risk. The ones here are specifically aimed at safety, but not necessarily at security. Other departments contribute to safety as well.

Restroom Logs

You have seen them in fast food restaurants, retail stores, and just about every public restroom—The Restroom Maintenance Log. These appear to be evidence that the facility is concerned with the cleanliness and stocking of paper goods. Rest assured that this is a risk reducer. A log of restroom cleaning provides several things. First, it shows the guest that someone is checking the restroom every X minutes. Second, it provides your defense that your cleaning staff cleaned up spills and other safety hazards every X minutes. Third, it provides a security defense that a set of eyes and ears entered that restroom on a regular frequency to prevent crime and violence.

You do not have to have a log on the bathroom wall, but you should have a log or schedule somewhere. If you assign a porter to clean three bathrooms all day, then you know he is in each one about a third of the time. That covers it as long as he goes back and forth to each one on his route. Be sure to assign male and female porters equally and consistently. Having a male responsible for a female restroom is not efficient, as he would have to close the restroom on each visit.

Safety Sweeps

I mentioned previously that a large retailer announces its safety sweeps on its public address system. That is a great policy (the announcements), but not necessarily for our industry. You should have a regular program of employees checking their areas for spills and safety hazards every few minutes. An employee calling in a spill to the cleaning staff

is not good enough. Each employee should be trained to stand by the spill while cleaning help is called to prevent accidents.

Spill Stations

Spill stations are displays set up around your property that contain the equipment for resolving a spill or safety hazard. Generally, a broom, mop, towels, and cleaning solution with a warning cone or sign complete a spill station. The more convenient you make it for employees to take care of a hazard, the fewer accidents you will have.

Escalator Shutdown

Escalators invariably have some sort of minor issue that can lead to major injuries if not addressed. Shoelaces are caught, luggage is caught, people trip or lose their balance, and some with wheelchairs even attempt to ride them. Since escalators are not staffed by an employee, all employees need to be trained how to deal with an escalator emergency. Working the emergency stop, notifying engineers, and keeping guests off the stopped escalator are the important elements of this training. This policy will reduce accidents and keep accident severity to a minimum.

SECURITY AWARENESS

We have all heard the suggestion that “Security Is Everyone’s Job.” Well, maybe that was “Safety,” but it still applies. Whether you have a separate Security Department, it is still a good idea—in fact it is necessary—that you involve every employee in security. There are several ways to engage the rest of the staff. This becomes a force multiplier for you, increases the number of eyes and hands assisting you, and provides a safer and more efficient operation for the entire business. Most employees will even enjoy the extra work if it is presented properly.

The first step to engaging other departments is to increase awareness. Most non-Security individuals have no idea what Security really does. They may think you are there to spy on them or just to deal with unruly guests. Many are amazed at all of the functions we have in a hospitality environment. Awareness, therefore, starts with an overview of what Security does and the types of things for which we watch. This can be done at a new-hire orientation or a visit during department training. Here are some of the things you can talk about and programs you can develop to increase awareness on your property.

Terrorism

Many government agencies and private corporations use a version of the “See Something, Say Something” campaign. This slogan simply reminds employees that it is everyone’s responsibility to report suspicious activity, no matter how trivial or incomplete it may seem. This, and any awareness program you may use, needs to be constantly reinforced through training, media, and follow-up.

Training can be a simple PowerPoint® presentation on the types of activities or things that may be important. You also can use professionally made videos, such as those produced by the Department of Homeland Security just for hotel employees. Media can be as simple as articles in the company newsletter and signs placed throughout the property with your company's slogan on reporting suspicious activity. You may want to provide an anonymous tip line within your internal phone system voicemail. This could be used for any crime or internal reporting and answered only by you or your delegate.

In August 2009, a housekeeper found some suspicious documents in the trashcan of a guest room in Columbia, Maryland. Police were called and they uncovered a ring of identity thieves and the personal information from dozens of victims. After a high-speed police chase, four suspects were arrested and charged with credit card and general theft.

This is just one example of hundreds of incidents where regular employees see something suspicious and say something to the authorities, which results in arrests.

Emergency Response

Emergency response is more than just awareness. It may become necessary for employees to participate in the response to certain major incidents. Fire alarms, active shooters, earthquakes, and hurricanes involve every occupant of a building. In most of these and other situations, security staff will be overwhelmed and will need as much assistance as possible.

This should be incorporated into your emergency procedures. Security officers will perform the critical functions, such as responding to the scene of the fire or cornering an active shooter. Bell persons can lockout elevators and evacuate the lobby. Food servers can clear restaurants. Housekeepers can check hotel rooms for stragglers.

Most employees, when presented with the idea that they are necessary and part of the team during emergencies, will respond eagerly and proudly. For those employees who might resist new job duties, it may be necessary to remind them or their department head of the gravity of these situations. If someone is injured or killed during a disaster or violent incident and he could have been saved if it was not for the inaction of an employee, your company may be held responsible. Besides that, most normal operations, such as delivering luggage and serving food, will cease during an emergency, so employees' regular jobs are suspended until the emergency is over. They may as well help with the emergency until it is resolved.

Workplace Violence

As discussed in the next section, workplace violence prevention is an important way for employees and supervisors for every department to keep everyone safe from harm.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence is one of the biggest issues facing the business world today. The hospitality industry is not immune from criminal acts that range from bullying to mass murder. Many of the incidents that have occurred over the past 30 years have taught us how to prevent them. All we need is a strong prevention program. Before we outline that program, we will look at the history and types of workplace violence.

OSHA defines workplace violence as any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. This includes a lot of different violence, so it is further divided into four types.

Type I—Criminal Acts

Violence resulting from criminal acts committed by strangers is by far the most common. In this type, the perpetrator is not an employee and has no relationship with the business or the employees except through the criminal act itself. This type includes robbery and even terrorism. As you might guess, taxi drivers are the most common victims of Type I violence. This chapter will not review prevention methods for robbery and other Type I violence as it was discussed as part of the Security Plan in Chapter 2.

Type II—Customer/Client/Patient Violence

Type II violence includes any type of violence where there is some sort of business relationship between the perpetrator and the company. Patients who commit violence in hospitals are the most common Type II violence. Mental patients assaulting doctors, disgruntled customers attacking salespersons, and even a guest attacking a prostitute in a brothel would be examples of Type II violence. This type is not discussed in this chapter, as violence from outsiders (guests) should be addressed as part of our Security Plan and there is no way to prevent it using the techniques to be discussed here.

Type III—Worker-on-Worker Violence

This type of violence is the one we most commonly associate with workplace violence. The term “Going Postal” (discussed later) derives from this type and includes any type of violence between current employees. It also relates to violence caused by a former employee or even a contractor or vendor. This type of violence is preventable because we know or have known the employee and we have some control over his or her behavior. We at least have the ability to monitor the behavior before it becomes violent.

Type IV—Violence Stemming from a Personal Relationship

Type IV is another type commonly associated with our image of workplace violence. In this type, the perpetrator is an employee, a former employee, or is involved with an employee in a personal relationship. Because we may or may not know the aggressor in this type of

violence, we need to identify the victim, who is our employee. This is not so difficult, and we will discuss this here as well.

History

In 1986, a postal worker named “Crazy Pat” walked into work in Edmund, Oklahoma, shot 14 co-workers, and then shot himself. In a few minutes, Pat had changed our view of workplace violence forever. He had been described as odd and a loner and had been involved in several confrontations with other employees. In fact, management was preparing to fire him for that behavior, but they never got the chance.

There were several similar shootings at postal facilities (and other businesses) up until 1993. In retrospect, the term “Going Postal” was earned by the United States Postal Service (USPS), which had a work environment that was ripe for violence. In the 1980s, the USPS employed over 900,000, so statistically it was bound to have a large percentage of workplace incidents. It also had the largest and one of the most powerful unions in the world up against a huge government bureaucracy, which made it easy for individuals to feel insignificant. As new companies like FedEx and UPS emerged, it became apparent that the post office had competition for the first time ever.

As a result, this bureaucracy started focusing on productivity and timelines more than ever and worker stress rose sharply. From 1986 to 1993, 1 in 12 postal workers had filed a grievance against management, which likely raised the stress levels even more. These grievances and other employee issues and morale were secondary to the timely delivery of mail. Right about that time, email changed everything.

Meanwhile, other companies had their own issues with Type III violence. Several current and former workers committed more mass killings. Background checks, which were previously reserved for security officers, money handlers, and managers, had to be completed on employees of all disciplines in any size company.

In 1993, after five more mass murders at postal facilities, management started to take notice. The first solution was to establish a toll-free hotline for postal employees to report management abuse and other unfavorable work conditions. It was shut down a short time later because there were too many calls. Later that year, a new position called Workplace Environment Analyst was created to focus on the prevention of workplace violence. This may have had some limited success because there were no more mass shootings at postal facilities for several years.

In 1998, the U.S. Postmaster created the Commission on a Safe and Secure Workplace. This study did not receive much attention because “Going Postal” had kind of left the post office, but it created some prevention methods that are still in use today. Those will be discussed later.

Meanwhile, the late 1990s had several more mass workplace shooters. Many criminologists attempted to create a profile of the potential workplace killer, but were unsuccessful. The physical characteristics of these murderers were of all races, ages, nationalities, and both genders. Some were blue collar and some were professionals. We even saw teenagers get into the action at a Jonesboro, Arkansas, middle school and later at Columbine High School in Colorado.

As workplace homicide entered the twenty-first century, it finally became apparent that there were two things that contributed to this type of violence: difficulty dealing with anger, and the “end of the line” feeling. But most important, more than 80 percent of these killers left visible signs of their violent behavior—and not one of them “just snapped.”

Conclusions

The 30 years of history did lead us to some conclusions. Most attackers had no criminal record, but they almost all had poor job performance. As mentioned previously, they crossed all economic and social levels, were either current or former employees, and were of almost every race and gender. About half of them committed suicide. Almost all of them were motivated by anger, usually at the supervisor, and either had been terminated or were facing termination. About half of the murders occurred the same day as the termination and the other half occurred up to a year later. One postal worker waited three years to kill her co-workers. Very few had undergone a background check or their violent backgrounds were ignored.

Two of these factors are screaming for attention. One is the previously violent behavior, as noted by warning signs. Two, is the pending termination. We can deal with these two tangible subjects. Before we extrapolate those into some prevention methods, let's have a quick look at anger.

Anger

You may have learned in your college psychology class that there are two personality types: A and B. Anger is normal to each of them, and that anger can turn to violence in some people.

Type B personalities tend to be very passive. As they get angry, frustration builds until it turns to aggression. That aggression can turn to physical violence in some persons. This is not to say that every type B personality becomes violent; it only shows us how they could become violent. I like to think of a character like Darth Vader in the movie *Star Wars*. He started out as a happy, passive child, until his mother was murdered. He started displaying signs of aggression and violence that some noticed and some did not. His anger built up to the point where he turned to the “dark side” and became a mass murderer. This type of person faced with losing his job might appear to “snap.”

Type A people are generally aggressive in their daily routine. The angry ones tend to be mean and are the ones we consider bullies. They have to show their superiority by making others feel inferior. Imagine someone like that being fired from his or her job. “You are firing me? I will show you who's boss.” The embarrassment and loss of control become overwhelming to them and they decide to end everyone's life including their own.

These personality descriptions are very general and overly simple. We all understand that human emotions are very complicated and it takes years of education to get a grasp of them. For our purposes of developing a prevention module, the simplified version should suffice.

Workplace Violence Policy

The first step to prevention of workplace violence is to establish a policy. You may already have one, but if you do not, get some help in writing it. It is the Human Resources Department's job to write employee policies. Your labor lawyer or general counsel may have some input and there are plenty of samples on the Internet.

The policy should have three elements. First is your company's definition of workplace violence. The policy we started with might suffice, but make sure it includes threats, bullying, harassment, and intimidation in addition to physical violence. Second, it should include the duties of management and the duties of employees. For example, all employees have a duty to report workplace violence even if they are not sure whether it actually happened. Management has a responsibility to thoroughly investigate all reports and to report violence to HR and Security. Third, it should outline consequences. Define what will happen to those found in violation of the policy and what will happen to those who make false reports.

Make sure the policy includes the company name. It is important to make the company the victim rather than the employee. This will make some perpetrators realize that if they attack an employee, they are attacking the entire organization. This is a subtle scare tactic to potential offenders and it shows your employees, and any potential victim of such behavior, that you have their backs. Avoid using phrases like "zero tolerance" and defining specific penalties for violations. Part of the prevention process is a negotiation with a potential killer and we need to leave some wiggle room to do that. Also, avoid promises of confidentiality. You cannot guarantee that a witness or victim will remain anonymous. You may need them in court or a police report.

Developing the Program

There are several components involved in developing the program. First, review your company's pre-employment screening. Work history should be thoroughly checked. Interview questions should be designed to provoke responses that will reveal violent tendencies. Consider using a second interviewer or a team interview to get a valuable second opinion of personality. Always drug screen every new hire. Also, consider running contractors and vendors through a similar process. These methods are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 11.

According to the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, "firings are the cause of most violent, rampage attacks in the workplace." Actually, that is like saying guns are the cause of most murders. Terminations are the *motive* for most of these mass murders. Knowing that, we can train our supervisors and managers, in all departments, how to discipline and terminate employees. It is possible to avoid that "end of line" feeling when firing someone, but it takes some tact and it takes more time. Supervisors should also be taught how to properly discipline employees so that it is a positive coaching experience rather than one that will leave an employee angry and vindictive.

Managers and supervisors also can be taught how to identify the behaviors that indicate a tendency toward violence. Employees who make threats or react irrationally to trivial matters should be identified and the situation resolved as soon as possible.

Employees usually know the signs before anyone else and can be extra eyes and ears to future problems.

If your company does not have an employee assistance program, you should look into getting one. If you have one, make it more than a brochure in the Benefits office. This is a valuable employee benefit that can be used early in the escalation of violence. Use it to get help for employees before they become a violent problem. Sometimes this program and others can be used in lieu of termination. If you have an employee with an anger management issue, order him or her to seek counseling as a condition of employment. This defers their anger back to themselves. If they drop the program, it is on them and not the company. Other negotiating can take place to avoid violence. If you want to get rid of someone who you fear is going to be violent, why not buy them off? Maybe you allow them to resign, or you promise not to contest their unemployment benefits, or even give them a severance. A few thousand bucks to have someone leave with a smile will go much farther for your peace of mind. I did not believe this until I tried it.

We had an employee who was a loner. He did his work for the most part, but was mediocre at best and did not get along with others. One day, his co-workers teased him about some less-than-great work he did. His response was: "One of these days, I am going to come back here and mow all of you down with my AK-47." This was a union employee and if we had fired him, it definitely would have come back as a grievance. Instead, we got together with his department head, the union leader, and our labor counsel. We all agreed we were scared to have him on the property and equally worried that he might actually come back and make good on his threat. We got the union representative to buy in to a deal where the employee resigns, collects unemployment and all his accrued vacation time, and we put nothing in his file. I cannot express the relief on everyone's mind when that employee shook everyone's hand as he left and bragged about all the fishing he would be doing. It cost us about \$5,000 and was worth every penny. He left without an "end of the line feeling." He had hope and optimism.

Another useful tool is the exit interview. A good exit interview can be used just as the hiring interview to identify violent emotions. Ask questions to find out about his state of mind regarding revenge, anger, and whether he has any hope for future jobs, where to live, income, bills, etc. This is not necessary for every employee and not everyone will do it, but most angry people want to vent to someone. The venting alone may be enough to avoid a problem later.

Related Policies

Besides having a workplace violence policy, there are other policies important in preventing it. Drug use and possession, in some cases, go hand in hand with violence, theft, and other misconduct. It has no business in the workplace and your policy should reflect that. A strict drug testing policy for cause or postaccident should be in place. Most lawyers do

not recommend random testing because it is difficult to make testing truly random. I support it, but I suspect your lawyer will not.

Weapons should be prohibited on property. The last couple of years have seen many conservative states guarantee the rights of individuals to carry guns in their cars, whether the employers permitted it or not. Whatever the laws in your state, you do not have to allow weapons on your property. If you are in a right-to-carry state, provide a safe place and method for employees to secure their weapons at work so they are not stolen from their cars.

Anonymous tip lines have been addressed in a couple of places in this book. Workplace violence prevention is a perfect reason to have an employee tip line. If someone is worried for their safety or does not want to be directly involved, they should have a mode of communicating directly with management. One way to do this is setting up a voicemail box that is only accessible by Security or HR.

Training Program

Once we have our policies in place, it is time to train everyone. Training needs to start at the top. Executives are trained first to get their buy-in and support. Supervisors and managers need training in leadership, prevention, and awareness. Leadership training includes proper counseling techniques, terminations and layoffs, hiring and interviewing, etc. Prevention includes how to intervene in a violent situation, de-escalating a violent employee, and avoiding mistakes that create a violent or uncomfortable atmosphere. Awareness training is most of the information contained in this section of the book. All employees should know what causes violent behavior, how to recognize it, and how to report it.

Conflict resolution training is not only good for guest services and handling complaints, but supervisors and co-workers can use it to maintain peace in the work area. Employee assistance programs should be made clear to every employee so supervisors and co-workers can see the value in this free service. Active shooter training and response to other emergencies should be given to all employees so they know what to do in the event there is a dangerous episode while at work. Finally, communication should be included in this training. Where do employees go to report violence? What type of violence do they report? Who has to be notified? What if there is an incident off-duty?

As I mentioned before, *document* all training.

Threat Management Team (TMT)

Also called Threat Assessment Teams (TATs), this is one of the solutions I mentioned earlier that was developed by the Postal Commission. The TMT or TAT is made up of HR, Legal, Safety, Security, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and even medical professionals from your company or from outside. When a report of violence or a potentially violent person is identified, this team is assembled to review the case. They can come up with alternatives to termination and a comprehensive course of action that is in everyone's interest. Some of their options are to recommend medical or psychological treatment, to require a fit-for-duty evaluation, reassignment of the offender, anger management training, and many other clever ideas.

This team manages the prevention program to keep it current by making changes. In the event of a major violent incident, this team would communicate with staff, the media, and police to control information going out.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Most of the prevention methods we discussed previously are related to Type III Workplace Violence—the disgruntled employee. Type IV, as you recall, was violence from a domestic situation involving an employee. In that type of violence, we often do not know the aggressor and certainly do not have any control over him, so our first step is to identify the victim. First, here is a very brief history.

Domestic violence in the workplace does not always get the same headlines because there is generally only one victim. But, as we all know, everyone in the workplace can be traumatized or even injured or killed as a result of this type of violence. Over the past 30 years, society has taken a very strong stand against domestic violence. Restraining orders are handled as a matter of routine, and friends, neighbors, and relatives of victims tend to be more aware and more willing to assist someone who is being abused. Unfortunately for us, the aggressor has learned that it is much easier to abuse the victim at work than at home. There are no family members, dogs, or alarm systems to protect the victim and the aggressor knows right where to find her.

Here are some statistics: 74 percent of domestic violence victims are harassed at work, 64 percent of domestic violence victims report that their job was adversely affected by their attacker, 83 percent of EAP referrals are for domestic violence, and 15 percent of women who die on the job are killed by their abuser.

Relating back to our risk assessment in Chapter 1, we need to do something to mitigate this type of violence. Our first step is to identify the victim (because we do not know the aggressor in most cases). Most people have been exposed to domestic violence enough to know that a victim experiences unexplained bruises, absences, and anxiety. Their lack of concentration or disruptive phone calls and visits affect their job performance. The best way to identify a victim is to just ask them. What? HR always says we cannot ask about someone's personal life. Of course you can. If there is something affecting a person's job performance, you can certainly ask what it is.

Once we identify a victim, we need to help them help themselves. As mentioned before, this is not only for them but also to protect our other employees. We can help someone get a restraining order by walking her through the process, going with her to court, or giving her work time to go to court. If a regular restraining order does not suffice, some states allow companies to get a restraining order. This takes the heat off the employee and puts it on you.

Other options include the EAP or other counseling, increased security such as escorts to the vehicle, panic alarms, and special parking arrangements. HR can consider temporary reassignment of the victim to get her out of public areas or even relocation to another property.

As a last resort, there is termination. That's right: termination. If you have a victim who is being beaten at home, receiving threats that her boyfriend will kill her at work,

and she is doing nothing to help you prevent the problem, you may have no other choice but to terminate her. This is better than putting all of your other employees in danger and disrupting the business. Tell a victim that this is an option, and that may solve the entire problem.

Our final safety topic in this chapter is not related to violence or accidents because it is environmental. Natural hazards, like weather and bugs, are hardly preventable, so awareness, preparation, and reaction are keys to keeping everyone healthy.

BED BUGS

Bed bugs not only make the occasional appearance in hotel rooms, but also they have recently been infesting news reports and blogs. Although no one has come out and reported an epidemic or widespread infestation, the perception is clear. Sometimes in the tourism business, perception is more important than reality. And the perception now seems to be that it is a big problem. One recently published list of the 15 worst cities for bed bugs seemed directly proportional to population, with New York at the top, so it is difficult to see any trends.

Provided here are some facts about bed bugs that do not come from the people paid to eradicate them or from the agencies that spread the news. I hope that you will be able to use this reality at your facility to change the perception and deal with this issue.

Bed bugs are tiny flat insects that resemble a small version of a cockroach. They feed on the blood of mammals. They do not fly but tend to travel on humans and in their luggage. Their small, flat shape allows them to crawl into mattresses and crevices so that they are virtually invisible until they come out to feed. They gorge on humans much like a mosquito, digging their elongated beak into the skin, and drawing blood for as long as 10 minutes. The “bite” is usually not felt and occurs at night when they prefer to come out of hiding. Although they draw blood, they are not known for carrying disease.

The insects are usually found in and around mattresses and are distinguished by their small dots of brown excrement or reddish blood smears. They do not have nests or colonies but will congregate in those dark places near their feed. Due to their size and hiding places, they are best discovered by a trained professional.

Bed bugs have been around for centuries and were almost completely eradicated in the early 1950s with the use of DDT. This did not apply to other parts of the world where they have continued to breed. The recent resurgence may be due to increased world travel. Bed bugs spread just like a virus by piggybacking onto a traveler or his luggage. They can be found in hotels, airplanes, and other tourist locations. However, bed bugs also are prevalent in households and, unlike cockroaches that are attracted to filth, they just want blood, so they can be found in the cleanest of environments.

Prevention of bedbugs is almost impossible, but the best method is finding them and destroying them before they move on. Once again, a professional exterminator who knows where to look and how to destroy them does this. Besides poison, bed bugs can be killed by exposure to heat over 120° for at least 10 minutes. Clothes can be washed in hot water or even just dried in a hot clothes dryer. Other items such as electronics that cannot be exposed to water or a dryer can be placed in a plastic bag in the sun or a hot car.

Hotel managers should consult their professional pest control company before they have a bed bug complaint to devise a plan that eliminates the problem while caring for their guests. The exterminator may recommend destroying items such as mattresses and furniture that are infested as they are difficult items to treat. The hotel should make arrangements for the guests' belongings and other items to avoid spreading the problem. And don't forget that if bed bugs are in one room, they are likely in adjacent rooms. This may mean treating or inspecting as many as nine rooms (the infected room, one on each side, and the rooms immediately above and below those rooms).