

EFFECTIVE PREPARATION FOR VIOLENT EVENTS –

The Calm Before The Storm

Active Shooter. Armed Intruder. Hostile event. Workplace Violence (WPV) is known by many names. The results; however, remain the same. Employees, managers, clients, innocent bystanders (collateral damage) are injured and often killed. The resulting investigations, depositions litigations, media coverage, loss of productivity and the (negative) stigma now associated with the city, corporation, company or location may prove costly and/or catastrophic.

To begin planning (effectively) for these events, there are several considerations.

- Complete a Security Assessment – Where are we now and where do we need to be?
- What are the (4) most common sources of Workplace Violence?
- What can **you** (you, your safety/security team and management) do to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate the effects of the event? (*NOTE: When considering these three options, we strongly suggest you prioritize **avoidance and reduction** over mitigation. Air Bags are **mitigation** tools.*)
- What documentation should you locate, approve and integrate into your current policies and procedures? Are your policies/procedures available in an electronic format on your computers, tablets and smart phones?
- What actions should be taken to ensure your local first responders (Law Enforcement, Fire and EMS) are “in sync” with your new protocols or theirs?
- What will a jury decide regarding your preplanning, event protocols and post event actions?

Security assessments are designed to document your **current state of readiness** by identifying what equipment (cameras, doors, windows, locks) is installed, if catastrophic conditions exist (failing to protect utility entrances, fuel storage, natural gas entry points, “smash and grab” routes) and management/staff’s current levels of safety/security awareness. Initiate an effective drill or (timed) evacuation and evaluate the results. Be sure to utilize a non-marked “Rally Point” that is out of sight or (preferably) in another structure. (*NOTE: If I can see you I can hurt you.*) Methods of inventorying evacuated staff and establishing reunification points are Phase 2 considerations.

The four (4) commonly recognized sources of WPV are:

1. **Criminal Intent.** SUSPECT has no relationship with the company or staff.
2. **Angry Customer.** SUSPECT has a relationship with the company or staff.
3. **Employee on Employee.** Past or present employee
4. **Personal Relationship.** Non-business, but personal relationship with employee to include domestic violence.

Criminal Intent by SUSPECTS may be prevented or diverted (to another target) by “hardening” your site. The addition of cameras (if applicable) and the associated signage are excellent deterrents. Having your “adopted Cop” drive through your parking lot on a random schedule together with increasing your levels of lighting (LED) may make a SUSPECT think twice about targeting you and/or your facility. What are your visual deterrents?

Dealing with **angry customers** is part of doing business. Even with perfect products and customer service, it seems inevitable that someone will take offense with some aspect of your efforts. Verify your managers and staff have mastered (proven) de-escalation techniques and understand the (important) difference between **sympathy** and **empathy**.

Obtain, review and approve internationally accepted guidelines and standards (*Example: DHS - Department of Homeland Security*) regarding armed intruder/active shooter protocols. Designate restrooms as fall back locations if escape is NOT an option or if staff/visitors are not physically capable of fleeing. Recommend installing keyed locks and “peep holes” in the doors to verify the SUSPECT is not outside the door when someone requests entry. Contact your local Law Enforcement and ask about their capabilities (SWAT, SRT, etc.) and response tactics. (*Example: Hot, warm, cold zones*) Since most commercial phone systems today are VOIP, you may NOT be able to dial 911 (9-911?). Your IT staff may confirm the correct line/number selection to reach first responders. Remember ... calling 911 immediately is important since waiting for help to arrive **can take the rest of your life**.

Train your managers and staff to process (perceived or literal) threats quickly. Since VIOLENCE is not a trait, rather a process ... warning signs, statements and/or actions (HUMINT – Human Intelligence) typically precede catastrophic

events. If someone warned one of your staff members “Don’t come to work tomorrow. Something bad is going to happen.” What would they do with that information? Is it “their problem”? Are they allowed to take action(s) without prior approval? **Empowerment is a force multiplier.** Post event depositions will clearly document your process or the lack of a process.

Employee on employee events often revolve around habitual bullying, harassment or hazing events. Do you have a strong anti-bullying (and related) policy in place and are the managers and staff aware of the content and consequences of violations? Bullying may now be considered a human rights violation. If reported, it is recommended that corrective action be taken (and documented) within 24 hours. Do you have a “zero tolerance” policy for any/all hostile actions? Do you have a competent EAP provider who can assist with a “fitness” or “return to duty” plan? Do you have a HRET (High Risk Employment Termination) template that is the product of hundreds of successful (no injuries reported) terminations? The document should prompt you through site selection, day of the week, room preparation, pre-SUBJECT arrival actions and several DO NOT ALLOW actions that have proven to be fatal if ignored.

Personal relationship(s) safety/security concerns are often the result of on-going domestic issues. Are any of your managers or staff petitioners or respondents in OFP (Order For Protection) or RO (Restraining Orders)? Is so, how would you know? Several HR professionals have advised they now include policy language that states “shall advise HR of the issuance” so that the employing organization can better prepare for a possible event. Smart phone apps like Phenced (WWW.Phenced.com), Companion (WWW.companionapp.io), WWW.Zello.com/app or devices like SPOT (WWW.findmespot.com) may also be life savers.

The key to your organization processing this information into a “living document” designed to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate your risk may be attributed to two (2) words. They are “**PARADIGM SHIFT**”. Definition - *A fundamental change in the basic concepts and experimental practices of a scientific discipline.*

The frequency of events, numbers of victims and personal levels of risk are increasing. We need to adjust, escalate, refocus, plan, practice and apply **realistic efforts** to the new “normal”. Klebold and Harris’s attack on unarmed management, staff and students in the Columbine School was considered by many to the “Pearl Harbor” of active shooter events. First responders did everything correctly, by the standards of the day. Reports by proven groups (*Seale, Hard Tactics*) are now suggesting that prompt and decisive actions by the (intended) victims may significantly change the outcome of the event.

A **professional** has the answers **BEFORE** the questions are asked, or knows where to find them quickly. How will you and your organization respond?



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