

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black blazer over a blue top and dark pants, walks through a dimly lit parking lot at night. She carries a large brown shoulder bag. In the background, a man in a dark hoodie walks away from the camera. The scene is lit by overhead lights and the glow of nearby buildings.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Late-Night Retail



ABC STORES
OF SOUTH CAROLINA



Partners Risk Services
Risk Management and Insurance Consultants

How to Use this Presentation

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This training material presents very important, pertinent information. It should not be assumed, however, that this program satisfies every legal requirement of every state. Some states require the training be developed and delivered by an individual with specific training and experience.

This training is AWARENESS LEVEL and does not authorize any person to perform work or validate their level of competency; it must be supplemented with operation and process-specific assessments and training, as well as management oversight, to assure that all training is understood and followed.

Your organization must do an evaluation of all exposures and applicable codes and regulations. In addition, establish proper controls, training, and protective measures to effectively control exposures and assure compliance.

This program is neither a determination that the conditions and practices of your organization are safe, nor a warranty that reliance upon this program will prevent accidents and losses or satisfy local, state, or federal regulations.





The risk of experiencing job-related violence increases for people working in retail environments, especially those open late at night or overnight, such as **gas stations, convenience stores, and pharmacies**.



Organizations have a responsibility to make the workplace as safe and secure as possible for employees and customers, with a **comprehensive workplace violence prevention program, work practice and engineering controls, and employee training.**



Course Overview

1. Workplace Violence Factors
2. Workplace Violence Prevention Program
3. Controls
4. Employee Procedures



1

Overview

What you need to know:

- Why late-night retail is vulnerable to violence
- Contributing factors



2

Workplace Violence Prevention Program

What you need to know:

1. The scope of a workplace violence prevention program
2. Critical elements of workplace violence prevention training
3. Reporting, documentation, and follow-up procedures for incidents of violence



Management Commitment

Management has a responsibility to protect employees from all dangers on the job, including altercations with dangerous individuals.

- Creating a comprehensive written program to prevent workplace violence is **essential** for late-night retail establishments.
- Employees and management must work with each other to foster a culture of **zero tolerance** for violence in the workplace.



Program Scope

The scope of the program may vary depending on the size, location, and specialization of your facility. However, most programs should establish policies and procedures for the following categories:

- Roles
- Hazard identification
- Training
- How to report violent incidents
- Incident response procedures
- Incident follow-up and investigation
- Engineering controls
- Work practice controls
- Relationships with law-enforcement personnel
- Program analysis and improvement
- Recordkeeping



Delegate authority over various aspects of the program to responsible parties as appropriate.



Gathering Information

Conduct a detailed hazard assessment, and schedule periodic inspections to discover new hazards.

- Review records from recent violent incidents both within your organization's retail stores as well as similar organizations in your area to identify trends or higher risks associated with particular departments, work areas, job titles, activities, or time of day.
- Survey both employees and customers to identify routines or common situations that may put individuals at higher risk of experiencing a violent incident.
- Know the level of violence and crime in your location.



At locations with a history or high risk of violent crimes or robberies, increase controls and staffing.



Training

Training topics for staff:

- The signs of potential violence or robbery
- The importance of staying vigilant and cautious without underestimating anyone
- How to respond to emergencies, such as robbery or shoplifting attempts:
 - Do not resist a robbery. At all times, cooperate with the robber's demands.
 - If possible, initiate silent alarms.
- Violence de-escalation techniques (especially verbal techniques)
- How to properly report incidents
- The policy that any violent incidents must be reported as promptly as possible, even if nobody is injured



Training

Training topics for staff (continued):

- Appropriate procedures for tasks such as:
 - Cash handling
 - Returns or exchanges
 - Opening and closing procedures
- The necessary components and policies of the organization's workplace violence prevention program, including:
 - Why it is important for employees to participate in efforts to develop and implement the program as well as evaluate its effectiveness
 - Why the incident investigation and analysis process is important to prevent similar incidents from occurring



Reporting Incidents

- Establish whom employees will report incidents to.
- Assure that employees may report such incidents without fear of punishment or retaliation.
- In addition to actual violent incidents, encourage employees to watch for and report any working conditions that may increase the risk of violence, such as:
 - Inadequate lighting or surveillance.
 - Defective security measures such as door locks or anti-theft devices.
 - Repeat suspicious customers.



Incident Response

Establish the following:

- Management notification procedures
- Who will respond to the incident
- When and how to contact law enforcement or additional emergency agencies
- Protocol for the comprehensive investigation of incidents
 - Establish who will investigate and who will conduct interviews.
 - Investigators must gather all possible evidence and information and document everything.
 - Investigations must be kept as confidential as possible.



Management support must be available for guidance in emergency situations at all times .



Incident Follow-up

- After the incident, determine:
 - Steps to protect victims of violence from further danger.
 - Appropriate corrective actions, which are sufficient to prevent violence from occurring again.
- Establish programs to provide victims or witnesses of violence with:
 - Appropriate medical assistance.
 - Psychological counseling.
 - Other forms of trauma care as necessary.
- Establish and follow OSHA and state reporting requirements for injuries, illnesses, and fatalities resulting from violent incidents.



Emergency Personnel

- Create and maintain working relationships with landlords and facility managers, lessees, and security, law enforcement, and emergency agencies to assure that hazards are minimized and that any incidents will be responded to in a timely manner.
- Assure that on-site security personnel, if applicable, demonstrate competence in handling violent or potentially violent situations, including methods of diffusing situations or physically intervening if necessary.
- Keep emergency numbers posted by all phones.



Recordkeeping

Keep records of the following:

- Reports of violent incidents
- Medical reports for injuries resulting from violent incidents
- Incident analyses, investigations, and corrective actions taken
- OSHA injury and illness logs
- Minutes from safety committee meetings
- Training records
- Recommendations from law enforcement and emergency agencies for preventing or responding to violent incidents
- Implemented administrative or work practice changes in attempts to reduce the risk of violent incidents



Program Analysis and Improvement

Regularly evaluate the program. The program should establish procedures for the following actions:

- Identify safety or security issues and trends in injuries and accidents by reviewing:
 - Incident reports and investigation findings.
 - Staff meeting minutes.
- Establish baseline rates of violent incidents for comparison to later observed trends.
- Obtain input from employees, safety committees, and your insurance company's loss prevention consultants on how the program could be improved and whether improvements are working.
- Make any necessary changes or modifications to the violence prevention program.
- Arrange for local law enforcement and your insurance company's loss prevention consultants to review the program, survey applicable worksites, and recommend any improvements.
- Identify and evaluate new violence prevention strategies.
- Monitor implementation of changes to assure their effectiveness.
- Assess worksites for factors that may increase the risk of a violent incident, such as the floorplan of the building or store front, the interior or exterior lighting, or the installed surveillance systems.



3

Controls

What you need to know:

1. Effective controls for preventing an incident of customer violence
2. Strategies for increasing visibility



Alarms

Install:

- Chimes, anti-theft sensors, and height markers at all customer entrances.
- An alarm system out of public view that can be easily triggered by employees in the register area.



The goal of controls is to create enough of a deterrent to discourage perpetrators from choosing your organization as a target.



Physical Barriers

- Arrange structures to direct the flow of customer traffic.
- Keep register areas behind a physical barrier:
 - A sales counter must be wide and high enough to make reaching across or jumping over difficult.
 - In addition, consider protecting high-risk employees with additional barriers, such as plexiglass.



Surveillance

- Assure that locations are equipped with adequate surveillance systems.
- Test the surveillance systems on a regular basis to assure that they are operating properly.
- In addition to monitoring the inside of the building, also monitor the outside.
- Train employees to report suspicious persons outside to the police.
- Hire security guards as needed.
- Participate in or arrange community and business watch programs.



Signage

Prominently display signs that indicate that the premises are monitored and limited cash is on hand. (Specify the limited amount).



Maximizing Visibility

Eliminate blind spots: all areas of the store should be visible to staff.

- Keep all areas of the property, both interior and exterior, well-lit.
- Establish a preventive maintenance schedule to change out light bulbs, so that they do not burn out.
- Control customer access to unmonitored areas, such as restrooms or merchandise stored outdoors, by locking these areas.
- **Maximize employees' visibility from their workstations, both in their ability to see and be seen:**
 - Limit the height of shelving units or merchandise displays.
 - Make sure that window signage does not interfere with employees' view of the storefront or parking lot or with approaching customers' view of the register area.
 - Install curved mirrors at strategic points throughout the storefront.



4

Employee Procedures

What you need to know:

1. The common warning signs of a potentially violent incident
2. How to respond to a robbery



Routine Procedures

Incorporate violence prevention activities in daily routines.

- Employees must regularly check lights, locks, and cameras for normal functionality.
- Keep detailed policies for when to lock or unlock facility doors. Train and periodically retrain employees on these policies.
- Keep back doors locked.
- Implement safe employee dress guidelines, such as discouraging the wearing of necklaces, loose clothing, or other items that may be easy to grab by an assailant.
- Create procedures and safe practices for outdoor activities (e.g., taking out trash only when another employee is present).
- Opening and closing should ideally be done in pairs.



Employees Working Alone

Extra precautions must be taken to protect employees who work alone.

- Regularly contact these employees to make sure they are safe, such as with phone calls or a buzzer that requires a response.
- Create a procedure for action when an employee does not respond.



Money Handling

Employees must be trained to do the following:

- Do not handle money alone.
- Limit the amount of cash kept in the register.
- Prohibit large-bill cash transactions.
- Encourage electronic payments.
- At night:
 - Use only one register.
 - Leave empty registers open with the drawers tilted up.
- When not actively using the register, lock the drawer and hide the key.
- Do not count cash at the sales counter.



Money Handling

In addition, employers must:

- Install a drop safe for employees to deposit excess cash, which employees are unable to open.
- Either create a separate cash-handling area out of public view, or require employees to lock doors before cash-handling activities, such as preparing for shift changes or deposits.
- Control access to areas with cash.



Deposit Procedures

Employees must be trained to do the following:

- Never make bank deposits alone at night.
- Vary the routine, time, and route that deposits are taken to banks.
- Stay inconspicuous when making a bank deposit.



If relatively large sums of money are kept regularly on the premises, use an armored pickup service.



Staff Awareness

Train staff to:

- Watch for and recognize warning signs and behaviors that may lead to violence.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions without sufficient evidence.
- Be aware that **anyone can instigate a violent incident**, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or age.
- Report any suspicious customer behavior according to the organization's policies and procedures.



Recognizing Suspicious Behavior

Common traits that may indicate impending robberies and shopliftings include the following:

- Wearing loose or bulky clothing or carrying large bags
- Walking with an unusual gait as though movement is being impeded by something
- Frequent visits to the store without making purchases
- Frequently picking up random objects and putting them back quickly
- A large group of individuals entering the store at once
- An individual closely watching the register area without actually shopping
- Nervous, skittish, or paranoid behavior
- Appearing under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Keeping a vehicle running in the parking lot while in the store
- Waiting in a vehicle or standing outside the store for an extended period of time before entering the store



This list only presents common signs of violent behavior: it is neither comprehensive nor to be used as a diagnostic tool.



Handling Shoplifters

Even shoplifters should be handled carefully. Law enforcement and security personnel will follow organizational policies to stop shoplifters, but the rest of staff should not put themselves at risk.

Train employees to do the following:

- Ask shoplifters politely, "Would you like to pay for that?"
- Do not confront an agitated or aggressive shoplifter.



During an Armed Robbery

Train employees to do the following:

- Stay calm and do not panic.
- **Do not resist** a robbery.
- Speak in a cooperative tone, without arguing.
- Move slowly and explain your movements to the robber.
- If possible:
 - Initiate silent alarms.
 - Memorize the suspect's description.



After the Robbery

While employees wait for the police to arrive:

- Never pursue the robber.
- Make sure the robber has left the area before moving.
- Lock the doors. Call the police, and do not reopen doors until they arrive.
- Do not touch anything the robber touched.
- Write down every detail about the robbery you can remember.



After the Robbery

Employer responsibilities:

- Supply employees with counseling and time off as needed.
- Report violent incidents to management and law enforcement, and file charges if necessary.
- Conduct an investigation to determine why the violent incident occurred and how to improve security to prevent a recurrence.





Summary

- Create a program to control hazards and train employees on safe practices.
- Employers must know the dangers at their workplace and create as many deterrents for robbers and protections for employees as necessary for the safety of staff.
- Employees must be trained to:
 - Never resist a robbery.
 - Follow all safe money-handling practices.
 - Follow safe practices for depositing money at the bank.
 - Understand and maintain security controls at the workplace.
- Violent incidents must be reported as promptly as possible, even if nobody is injured.
- Employers must respond to incidents by taking steps to protect victims of violence from further danger and implementing appropriate corrective actions that are sufficient to prevent future occurrences.
- The program must be continually improved.
- Employers must keep all necessary records.



*Be prepared for workplace violence.
Managers and employees must take
the time to be trained and equipped.*

