

Recognizing Potential Problems

Introduction

In addition to understanding what workplace violence is, supervisors and coworkers must be able to recognize behaviors that may lead to violence.

Possible indicators

The indicators listed below identify behaviors that might precede an incident of workplace violence. While the list is not all-inclusive and the behavior may not always lead to an incident, the list may serve to alert a supervisor or coworker to a potential problem. Signs and symptoms of a potentially violent employee include the following:

- Being emotionally unstable, such as needing to blame others
- Not accepting responsibility for things that go wrong
- Having few friends
- Holding grudges for unreasonable lengths of time
- Feeling entitled to everything and anything
- Placing unreasonable demands on supervisor's time
- Having few interests outside of work
- Overreacting to criticism or becoming belligerent
- Exhibiting erratic or aggressive behavior
- Not handling everyday stressors very well
- Exhibiting psychological disorders such as the following:
 - Severe depression
 - Anxiety and job stress
 - Panic disorders
 - Paranoia about people's motives

Other possible indicators

Supervisors and coworkers should also be aware of other possible indicators of a potentially violent person. The following are additional indicators:

- Intimidating, harassing, bullying, and belligerent or other inappropriate and aggressive behavior
- Having numerous conflicts with customers, coworkers, or supervisors
- Bringing a weapon to the workplace
- Making inappropriate references to guns, or making idle threats about using a weapon to harm someone
- Showing fascination with incidents of workplace violence
- Indicating approval of the use of violence to resolve a problem
- Indicating identification with perpetrators of workplace homicides
- Indicating desperation (over family, financial, and other personal problems) to the point of contemplating suicide