

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

There are no fail-safe measures to ensure that violence will not occur. Our chances to prevent acts of violence greatly improve with increased awareness of potential warning signs and rapid response to a potential problem. Employees and supervisors must do their part and report any inappropriate or unacceptable behavior that is disruptive, provoking, harassing, threatening, or unsafe. Early action and intervention can diffuse a potentially dangerous situation and prevent the occurrence of violence.

Identify and Evaluate Unacceptable Behavior

The employee's immediate supervisor is responsible for evaluating signs of unacceptable behavior or misconduct and taking appropriate action to put the employee on notice that such acts will not be tolerated. In most cases, the supervisor will face behavior or misconduct that can be handled administratively. There may also be instances when the supervisor will need to make a quick decision on whether the situation creates an immediate danger and requires the removal of the employee from the work site and/or the assistance of appropriate law enforcement or security personnel. Contingency plans for such occurrence should be developed and disseminated locally so supervisors will know whom to contact in cases of an emergency. It is imperative that supervisors work closely with the human resources staff to ensure that actions taken are in accordance with personnel management guidance.

Identifying Potentially Violent Situations

Recent studies indicate violent occurrences rarely happen without some warning. See paragraph 2.9 for warning signs of violence.

You should also be aware of *external* threats from organizations or the public. Being alert to specific issues or areas that might be targets of a particular group will impact on decisions that are made about increased security in a particular location, building, or facility. The following are some types of external threats you should be aware of:

Domestic Terrorists Groups. These are groups of people who have a specific agenda and set of beliefs. They believe acts of violence, such as arson or sabotage, are an acceptable means to achieve their goals. Domestic Terrorism is defined as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of potential or social objectives."

Special Interest Groups. These are groups of people who hold a specific belief or work for a specific cause and who might be at odds with Service policy. These groups are not necessarily violent and may not condone violence at all. However, violence may occasionally erupt when emotions prevail, or one person of the group acts on his or her own and commits an act of violence toward Service employees or facilities.

General Public. An employee may meet a member of the public who is generally upset with the Service, or the Government. They may be drunk, using drugs, or just in a foul mood that has nothing to do with the employee. Any of the above persons may respond in an inappropriate way and become violent.

Contractors. There have been instances where employees have been threatened and sometimes assaulted by contractors.