



Violence in the Workplace

Workplace violence are violent acts directed towards a person at work or on duty (i.e. physical assaults , threats of assault, harassment, intimidation or bullying). Workplace violence can occur at the workplace, on official travel, at field locations and/or at a client's home or workplace. Violence that occurs in the workplace can be classified into four categories: criminal - when the perpetrator has no legitimate relationship with the business or its employees; or customer or client - when the perpetrator has a legitimate relationship with the business and becomes violent while being served by the business; or co-worker - when the perpetrator is an employee, past employee of the business or contractor who works as a temporary employee on the site and who attacked or threatens another employee; or domestic violence - when the perpetrator, who has no legitimate relationship to the business, but a personal relationship with the victim, threatens or assaults the employee at the workplace.

Since 2003, there are more than 500 homicides per year in the workplace, with 1.7 million workers injured each year during workplace assaults. It has been estimated that about 20% of all violent crime occurs in the workplace and that 75% of workplace homicides involve firearms.

In 2011, there were a total of 468 work-related homicides, 78 females and 390 males . For women, assailants were most likely to be relatives. Of these, nearly all were spouses or domestic partners. Robbers were the most common type of work-related homicide assailant for men and the second-most common for women. African Americans are 2-3 times more likely to be assaulted. Additionally, almost 50% of all workplace homicides occurred in southern states.

Illinois Statistics

Violence and other injuries by person or animals was the second leading cause of workplace fatalities in Illinois in 2011. There was a total of 44 (24.9%) fatalities from violence and other injuries by persons or animals, 29 (16.4%) intentional injuries by other persons and 14 (7.9%) intentional self-inflicted injuries.

Additionally, violence and other injuries by person or animals were the leading cause of fatalities in the following industries: professional and technical services (100%) and retail trade (91.7%).

National Statistics

Workplace violence, including assaults and suicides, accounted for 17% of all work-related fatal occupational injuries in 2011.

Majority (70%) of fatalities from workplace violence cases are a result of crime, with a small percentage (~3%) attributable to interpersonal reasons.

Workplace violence accounts for just 1.3% of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses in the private industry. In total, there were 33,230 nonfatal violence or other injuries by person or animals in 2011.

In 2011, there were 11,760 nonfatal cases of intentional injury by other persons which required days away from work in the private industry.

High Risk Occupations

Approximately 75% of homicides and assaults occurred among four industries: retail, services, public administration and transportation. Some high risk occupations that result in fatalities include taxicab drivers; retail stores/grocery stores/liquor stores; law enforcement/protective services; gas station attendants; jewelers; and restaurants and bars, delivery services, hotels and motels.

Approximately 45% of all perpetrators of workplace violence are healthcare patients. Some high risk occupations in which nonfatal assaults occur are employees of nursing homes; social services; hospitals; retail and grocery stores; and restaurants and bars.

Risk Factors for Homicides/Assaults in the Workplace

- Contact with the public
- Exchange of money
- Delivery of passengers, goods or services
- Having a mobile workplace, such as a taxicab or police cruiser
- Working with unstable or volatile persons in health care, social service or criminal justice settings
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working late at night or during early morning hours
- Working in high-crime area
- Guarding valuable property or possessions
- Working in community-based settings

Intervention Strategies

There are multiple intervention strategies that could reduce and/or prevent some of the injuries related to workplace violence.

Environmental controls:

- Cash controls
- Lighting controls, both indoor and outdoor
- Entry and exit controls
- Surveillance, such as mirrors, and cameras, particularly closed-circuit cameras
- Signage
- Having multiple employees on duty
- Using taxicab partitions
- Having security guards present
- Providing bullet-resistant barriers

Behavioral interventions:

- Training on appropriate robbery response
- Training on use of safety equipment
- Training on dealing with aggressive, drunk or otherwise problem person

Administrative controls:

- Hours of operation
- Precautions during opening and closing
- Good relationships with police