



Center for Personal
Protection & Safety

CPPS-202

September 2008

Student Notetaker

Flash Point

Recognizing and Preventing Workplace Violence



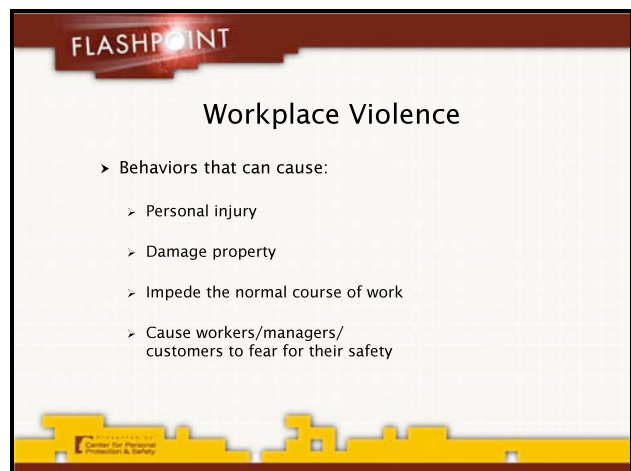
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Lecture: Workplace Violence

Mindset of Awareness & Commitment to Action

Objectives:

- Define workplace violence
- List myths associated with workplace violence
- Define the Workplace Violence Spectrum
- Recognize workplace violence Behaviors of Concern
- Define stalking
- Define domestic violence
- Recognize warning signs of domestic abuse
- Identify the workplace violence formula
- Identify a flash point
- Identify an action point
- Recognize common inhibitors to reporting a Behavior of Concern
- List available options to report a Behavior of Concern

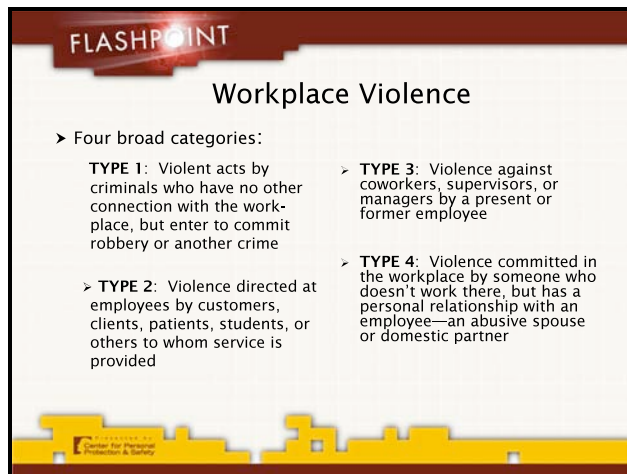


Any definition of workplace violence must be broad enough to encompass the full range of behaviors that can cause personal injury, damage property, impede the normal course of work, or make workers, managers, and customers fear for their safety.



Workplace violence covers a wide range of disruptive behaviors that may include threats, harassment, intimidation, bullying, assaults, stalking, and domestic violence that enter the workplace.

Workplace homicides, to include active shooter incidents, are infrequent events, but garner an incredible amount of media attention. In reality, these incidents merely represent the “tip of the iceberg.”

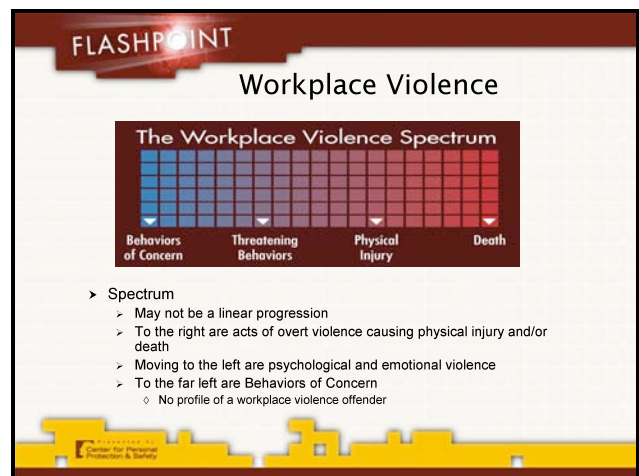


Specialists have come to a consensus that workplace violence falls into four broad categories:

One of the other myths that we see in workplace violence is that these events will resolve themselves. That if someone does not intervene or interfere, they'll just disappear or go away over time. We know for a fact that's **not** the case. Early intervention is the key to preventing workplace violence.

Employees may be in a state of denial that such a thing might be possible in their workplace. What we know is that violence is evolutionary. It builds up over time and is often preceded by behaviors which might suggest a propensity for future violence.

Many incidents that don't involve physical violence often go unreported. These can include disruptive behaviors that occur at the lower end of what's known as the Workplace Violence Spectrum. These disruptive behaviors include aggressive, hostile, or emotionally abusive behaviors that generate anxiety or create a climate of distrust, and that adversely affect productivity and morale. These behaviors could, but will not necessarily, escalate into more severe behavior falling further along the Workplace Violence Spectrum.



On the right of the spectrum are acts of overt violence causing physical injury and/or death. These acts range from non-fatal physical assaults with or without weapons – including pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, or biting – to, in the worst cases, lethal violence inflicted by shooting, stabbing, bombing or any other deadly means.

Behaviors of Concern

- > There are behaviors that suggest the potential for future violence
 - > If there's a behavior that makes you uncomfortable, it's best to listen to what may be an intuitive warning
 - ◊ If you see something or sense something, **say** something
 - ◊ May be an innocent explanation for behavior
 - ◊ if left unaddressed, could escalate and contribute to a toxic work environment



As we move to the left of the spectrum, we see a transition from physical violence to psychological and emotional violence. Here we have words or other actions that are disruptive, aggressive, hostile, or emotionally abusive that may generate a justifiable concern for personal safety. In this portion of the spectrum are behaviors, such as intimidation; stalking; bullying; and making threats, both direct and implied.

At the far left of the spectrum is what experts call Behaviors of Concern. A threat is one observable behavior; others may include brooding and/or comments about frustration or disappointment, writings, drawings, and other actions.

Individual employees can have a positive influence in their work environments and in recognizing Behaviors of Concern.



Behaviors of Concern that can alert supervisors and managers to potential problems that require investigation and possible intervention may include:

- Threats, threatening behavior, frequent aggressive outbursts, or excessive displays of temper
- A history of threats or violent acts
- Ominous fascination with weapons and/or references to weapons, violent media content or violent events



- Verbal abuse of co-workers and customers, or harassment through phone calls or emails
- Bizarre comments or behavior, especially if it includes violent content
- Holding grudges, inability to handle criticism, habitually making excuses, and blaming others
- Chronic, hypersensitive complaints about persecution or injustice
- Making jokes or offensive comments about violent acts

If there's a behavior that makes you uncomfortable, even if sometimes you can't really put your finger on why it's making you uncomfortable, you should heed that warning; many people call it intuition.

There may be an innocent explanation for a Behavior of Concern that you might have observed in your workplace. However, there are behaviors and patterns of behavior that suggest the potential for future violence.

Although psychological and emotional violence may appear to be more subtle, the consequences to individuals, work environments, and productivity can be just as devastating as episodes of physical violence.

FLASHPOINT

Behaviors of Concern

- Sadness -

- Some Behaviors of Concern, such as sadness, might not look like they could lead to a Flash Point
- What begins as sadness may evolve into a serious depression and the potential for suicide
 - Suicide is aggression turned inward; wherein homicide is aggression turned outward

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Some Behaviors of Concern, such as sadness, might not look like they could lead to a Flash Point. What begins as sadness may evolve into a serious depression and the potential for suicide. An individual contemplating suicide may not be thinking about taking his life alone, but may also decide to take the lives of others in the workplace.

Do not focus on “snapshots”; individuals may be having a bad day or two. Instead, attempt to look at behavior in context. Significant changes in patterns of behavior are far more telling. For example, an employee who is usually very social, gregarious, and communicative appears to go into a shell, isolating himself from his colleagues, and this behavior continues for a week or two.

FLASHPOINT

Behaviors of Concern

- † Do not focus on “snapshots”
 - ✦ No one behavior suggests a greater level of threat; significant changes in patterns of behavior are far more telling
- † Employee is sending out a personal “SOS” distress signal
- † Learn to recognize the signals that could point in the direction of violence and then learn to respond to them

At the very least, this employee is sending out a personal “SOS” distress signal and would probably benefit from a supportive contact.

FLASHPOINT

Behaviors of Concern

- > Minor non-violent conflicts that went unresolved built up until they were no longer manageable
 - > intervening early in a conflict may result in a resolution before the problem gets out of control
- > When people go into a crisis state, it affects the way they think, feel, and behave
- > Frequency, duration, and intensity are critical criteria when evaluating Behaviors of Concern

The Workplace Violence Spectrum

Behaviors of Concern → Threatening Behaviors → Physical Injury → Death

Resiliency, along with tolerance to frustration and impulsivity, are key ingredients when it comes to individuals’ coping skills being overwhelmed.

In many cases of worker-on-worker violence, minor non-violent conflicts that went unresolved built up until they were no longer manageable. By intervening early in a conflict between two people, whether it's two workers or a worker and supervisor, you may be able to resolve the problem before it gets out of control.

When people go into a crisis state, it affects the way they think, feel, and behave. Stress is cumulative and the road to violence is a progressive one. That is why **frequency**, **duration**, and **intensity** are all critical criteria when evaluating Behaviors of Concern.

FLASHPOINT
Behaviors of Concern
- Stalking -

- > Pattern of harassing behaviors intended to frighten, intimidate, terrorize, or injure another person
 - > Primary motives for stalking include power, control, and possession
 - > Offenders refuse to accept the end of the former relationship (real or perceived)
 - > When the victim spurns their unwelcome advances, the stalker often turns to intimidation

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Stalking refers to acts of following, viewing, communicating with, or moving in a threatening or menacing manner toward someone without that person's consent. It entails a pattern of harassing behaviors intended to frighten, intimidate, terrorize, or injure another person.

The primary motives for stalking include power, control, and possession. Offenders refuse to accept the end of the former relationship (real or perceived) and to give up their hold over the victim. Stalkers look upon the individual as a possession, one that solely belongs to them.

Stalking and domestic violence may often go hand-in-hand. Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, intimidation, threats, isolation and emotional, sexual, or economic abuse to control the other partner in a relationship. It's a significant problem in today's workplace--affecting nearly one out of every four women. Individuals who are in a violent or controlling relationship often feel anxiety, stress, and fear; many times they make dramatic changes in their lives.

FLASHPOINT

Behaviors of Concern - Domestic Violence -

- > Pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner controls another through the use of:
 - > Physical violence
 - > Coercion
 - > Intimidation
 - > Threats
 - > Isolation
 - > Emotional, sexual, or economic abuse
- > Affects nearly one out of four women in today's workplace

FLASHPOINT

Behaviors of Concern - Domestic Abuse -

† Employees may observe behaviors which might suggest violence at home

- Unexplained phone calls and emails at work
- Discomfort when communicating with others
- Anxiety and lack of concentration on the job
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Inappropriate clothing for the time of year
- Frequent work absences
- Unplanned use of personal time
- Disruptive visits to the workplace by a current or former intimate partner


Employees may often observe behaviors which might suggest some one is the victim of violence at home. The observed behaviors may include:

- Disruptive phone calls and emails at work;
- Discomfort when communicating with others;
- Anxiety and lack of concentration on the job;
- Unexplained bruises or injuries;
- Inappropriate clothing for the time of year;
- Frequent work absences;
- Unplanned use of personal time;
- Disruptive visits to the workplace by a current or former intimate partner

FLASHPOINT

Behaviors of Concern - Domestic Violence -

Many employers, as part of their workplace violence prevention program, have a "No Threats, No Violence" policy. A requirement of that policy is for any employee who obtains an order of protection to report that information to the appropriate individual within the organization so procedures can be instituted to protect the safety of that employee, as well as ensure the safety of other employees in the organization.



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Because domestic violence often spills over into the workplace, you should report signs of domestic violence just as you would other Behaviors of Concern.

FLASHPOINT

Triggering Event

- > A reprimand, termination, or layoff
- > Financial troubles, a separation, a divorce, or a death
- > A loss, whether real or perceived, in someone's personal or professional life
- > "Injustice collectors"
 - > Will not forget or forgive those wrongs or the people he believes are responsible

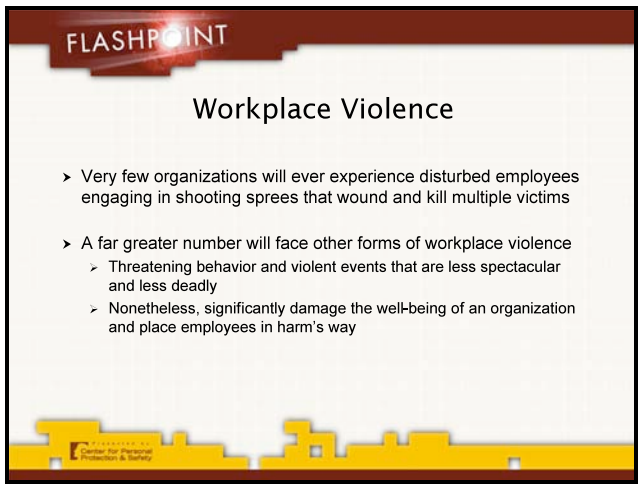


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It might be something significant to that individual, such as a reprimand, termination, or layoff. Or, it could be something that happened at home, such as financial troubles, a separation, a divorce, or a death. On the other hand, it might be a series of "imagined slights" to someone who is overreacting and blowing a situation out of proportion.


Many times, those who engage in violent behavior are doing so because of a loss, whether real or perceived, in their personal or professional life. This is what triggers a crisis for an individual. When people go into that type of mode, it affects the way they think, it affects the way they feel, and lastly, and what we need to be sensitive to, it affects the way they behave.

There are individuals that the experts term “injustice collectors.” They perceive every slight as something that they should take action upon. They’re constantly hypersensitive to criticism. No matter how much time has passed, the “injustice collector” will not forget or forgive those wrongs or the people he believes are responsible.



Only a very few organizations will ever experience disturbed employees engaging in shooting sprees that wound and kill multiple victims. A far greater number will face other forms of workplace violence: threatening behavior and violent events that are less spectacular and less deadly, but still significantly damage the well-being of an organization and place employees in harm’s way.

FLASHPOINT



Commitment to Action

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FLASHPOINT

Workplace Violence Formula

Awareness + Action = Prevention

- > You can do something about many situations
- > Action has to be appropriate
- > Without awareness and willingness to act, you truly become vulnerable

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Awareness + Action = Prevention. Of course the action has to be appropriate and effective, but without awareness and the willingness to act, you truly become vulnerable.

FLASHPOINT

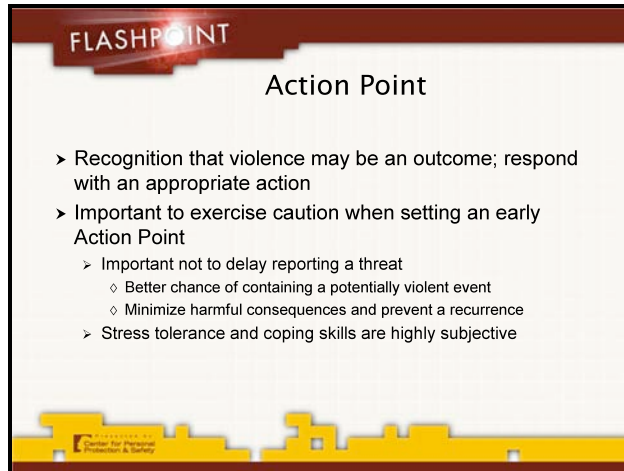
Flash Point

- > The point on the Workplace Violence Spectrum where actual violence occurs
 - > Exact location can vary from one situation and individual to another
- > Different actions in the work environment can trigger or cause a Flash Point
 - > May be the result of non-work related situations
 - ◊ Domestic Violence
 - ◊ Other Personal Issues

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A Flash Point is the place on the spectrum where actual violence occurs. A number of different actions in the work environment can trigger or cause a Flash Point. It may even be the result of non-work-related situations such as domestic violence or other personal issues.

It is important to note that the exact location of a Flash Point can vary from one situation and individual to another.



An Action Point is the place where you recognize that violence may be an outcome and you respond with an appropriate action. That's why it's so important to exercise caution when setting an early Action Point. No one can predict human behavior with certainty.

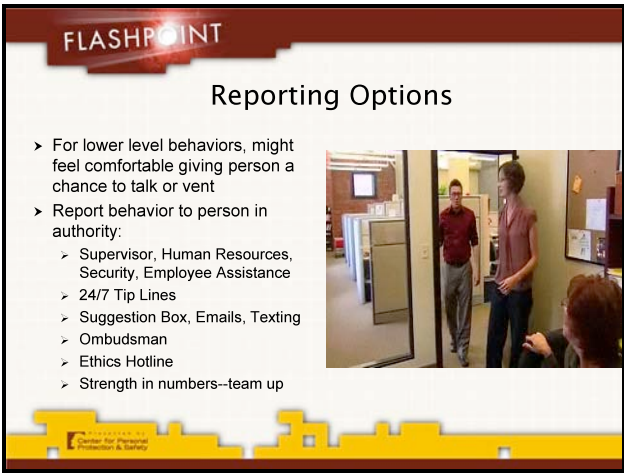
It goes without saying that the more quickly a threat is reported, the better the chance of containing an event before any violence takes place or, in the event of an injury incident, of minimizing the harmful consequences and preventing a recurrence.

If you see something or sense something, say something. Employees must take all behaviors or threats seriously.

The first roadblock to action is simply lack of awareness. People who have not been trained to recognize Behaviors of Concern will not have the awareness needed to respond. There are psychological barriers, too. Some people worry about being seen as a "busybody" or "snitch." They may be concerned about something, but they want to be sure a situation is really serious before taking action.



Sometimes people hesitate to report something because they are worried about retaliation or they believe it is someone else's responsibility. It is **your** responsibility. Your personal safety is at stake if a Flash Point is triggered in your work place...it **will** affect you in some way. People are the backbone of a workplace violence prevention program.



The slide features a red header with the word "FLASHPOINT" in white. Below the header, the title "Reporting Options" is centered. To the left of a central photograph is a bulleted list of reporting options. The photograph shows three people in an office setting: a man in a red shirt, a woman in a pink shirt, and another person whose back is to the camera. At the bottom of the slide, there is a yellow graphic of a city skyline and a small logo for the Center for Workplace Prevention & Safety.

FLASHPOINT

Reporting Options

- For lower level behaviors, might feel comfortable giving person a chance to talk or vent
- Report behavior to person in authority:
 - Supervisor, Human Resources, Security, Employee Assistance
 - 24/7 Tip Lines
 - Suggestion Box, Emails, Texting
 - Ombudsman
 - Ethics Hotline
 - Strength in numbers--team up

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What if a co-worker displays an outburst of anger? Is the individual having a really bad day and acting in a way that's out of character? If so, the right response might be to **note** it and **remember** it. However, if that kind of behavior continues, or if it seems to be escalating, you need to recognize it might lead to a Flash Point in the future.

For many lower level Behaviors of Concern, you might feel comfortable just asking the person if everything is okay. Oftentimes, the path to violence often begins with someone experiencing a loss in his or her personal or professional life. In those situations, just giving someone the chance to talk, or vent, about what's troubling them can be a powerful stress reliever.

If you've talked with a co-worker and their answers concern you, it may be time to go to the next level of action. Report it to an appropriate person in your organization. If you don't feel comfortable talking to the individual displaying the Behavior of Concern and if their behavior seems potentially threatening, then you should report it immediately.

Anger, in its milder form, may be someone just having a bad day. In its extreme form, aggressively angry behaviors are harmful and, for that reason alone, require timely attention and effective intervention. For these behaviors, the only effective response is to report them to a person in authority immediately.

