The Importance of Employee Training in Workplace Violence Prevention

Every year, thousands of Americans become victims of workplace violence. Homicides and non-fatal intentional injuries affect businesses in all industry sectors and their employees. Workplace violence not only disrupts the country's economy, but it jeopardizes the health of entire families.

Strong employee training and violence prevention programs can help minimize the occurrence of violent incidents on the premises of American businesses. Companies benefit by avoiding disruption and loss of earnings in the short term. In the long term, workplace violence prevention training can help build a stronger, more supportive company culture.

How Workplace Violence Impacts American Enterprises

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) considers workplace violence to be any threat or act of physical violence, intimidation, harassment, or any other threatening and disruptive behavior that occurs in a workplace. In this context, it does not matter whether a threat is made across a desk in an office, on a construction site, or the floor of a production facility.

In 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recorded just under 400 homicides in American workplaces. Nearly one in four of those homicides are carried out against employees working in sales and related occupations or serving customers. Staff in transportation and material moving industries, management positions, construction, and production are also among to top five occupational groups affected.

On top of those workplace homicides, the BLS counted more than

37,000 nonfatal injuries over the course of the year. So-called service occupations accounted for almost 50% of those injuries. These occupations include a wide range of jobs, such as healthcare and protective services but also food preparation and serving, grounds cleaning and maintenance, and other services.

Aside from the human cost, workplace violence costs American businesses between $250 and $330 billion every year. It is a serious problem both economically and societally.

Types of Workplace Violence

To develop effective solutions to workplace violence, it is important to understand the problem thoroughly.

One way of gaining better insight is to consider the different types of workplace violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) distinguish between four types of violence at work:

1. **Type 1 violence with criminal intent:** this type of violence usually occurs in conjunction with another crime. Picture a robbery of a bank or shop or a mugging of an employee getting ready to leave company premises.
2. **Type 2 violence between employees and clients:** this type of violence is relatively common in healthcare settings. According to the CDC, emergency and psychiatric treatment settings are affected most often.
3. **Type 3 violence between workers in the same workplace:** disagreements are normal in workplaces around the world. However, when those disagreements escalate into violence, they become dangerous for employers and employees. This type of violence includes problems between supervisors and their team members but also peer-to-peer violence. Bullying is part of this category, but extreme cases can lead to workplace homicide.
4. **Type 4 violence resulting from personal relationships:** Type 4 violence describes cases where problems from a person's relationships outside of work spill over into their

professional lives. Think about a life partner following a person to work and threatening them there.

Identifying the main causes of workplace violence within an industry or an individual business is the first step toward resolving and preventing recurrent issues.

How Strong Workplace Violence Prevention Programs Can Help

According to the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM), one in four Americans know of at least one incident of violence in their workplace. While they may not have been victims of workplace violence, these workers have been directly affected by it.

Moreover, three out of ten American employees feel badly equipped to deal with violence at work. Among human resources professionals, the number is slightly lower at just under 20%. Most organizations try to avoid hiring violent team members by screening applicants. However, pre-hiring screening is not always enough.

Equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to respond to a violent incident at work can go a long way toward changing America's workplace culture. What those skills are can vary widely between employers. That is why leading workplace violence prevention training programs can be tailored to individual organizations.

Common modules include active shooter preparedness, dealing with employee harassment, protecting staff from armed robberies, and dealing with irate customers. Aside from training employees to handle difficult situations, workplace violence prevention also includes establishing a policy of zero tolerance toward threats and other forms of violence.

The goal of workplace safety and security training programs is for employees to practice their reactions to threats, intimidation, and harassment. In addition, training participants also learn how

to defuse situations at work that could turn into dangerous incidents.

Workplace Violence Prevention and OSHA

OSHA provides employers with a range of guidelines to minimize and mitigate the risks of workplace violence. Among the resources provided by the administration is information relating to risk factors, prevention programs itself, and training resources.

Identifying risk factors allows employers to increase awareness of workplace violence in general and potential dangers specific to the organization. Based on those risk factors, businesses can start developing violence prevention programs that are specific to the organization and its specific requirements. OSHA also provides online training resources for employers to access and customize to their individual businesses.

OSHA's guidelines stop short of specific standards for workplace violence. The administration can, however, hold employers accountable under the General Duty Clause of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. The clause states that employers have a duty to provide a workplace that is "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm." Its Enforcement Procedures and Scheduling for Occupational Exposure to Workplace Violence spell out policy guidance and procedures for inspections. However, individual employers must draft and implement their own preventative policies and violence prevention training programs.

Conclusion

Workplace violence costs American companies billions in economic value, not to mention the human cost to employees who become victims of workplace assaults, harassment, and even homicides. Employers have the power to implement strong employee training programs for workplace violence prevention. With the help of those

programs, American companies will become the safe places that employers, employees, clients, and other stakeholders deserve.

Source: ROAR (roarforgood.com)