# How You Can Prevent Violence in Your Workplace



## Safety Talk

#### What's at Stake?

Workplace violence can happen anywhere, any time. It can come from a co-worker or a stranger. And it isn't limited to physical assault. Workplace violence is any form of threatening or disruptive behavior. It can be as simple as a gesture, such as a raised fist, or as complicated as sabotage

#### What's the Danger?

Every year about two million workers in the US experience workplace violence. The situation is similar in Canada, where 17 percent of all self-reported incidents of violence, including sexual assault, physical assault and robbery, occur in the workplace.

It seems almost weekly there is another horrific, headline marking story of a violent incident at a workplace. In addition to these newsmaking events, countless other violent incidents occur daily in the workplace. They may not make the headlines, but they are no less traumatic for the victims involved.

### How to Protect Yourself

Before people explode in violence at work, they may give signals that something is wrong. Here are 10 warning signs that trouble might be brewing:

- 1. Social isolation
- 2. Decrease in personal hygiene
- 3. Complaints of unfair treatment
- 4. Excessive lateness or absenteeism
- 5. Faulty decision-making
- 6. Blaming others for mistakes
- 7. Inappropriate comments about revenge, violence or weapons
- 8. Disrespect for authority
- 9. Swearing
- 10. Overreacting to criticism

Here are 10 precautions workers can take to minimize or prevent violence on the job:

- 1. Don't get drawn into arguments.
- 2. Take verbal threats seriously, but don't respond to them.
- 3. Report all threats, incidents of bullying, and harassment to your supervisor or the company's security department.
- 4. Watch for unauthorized visitors, even those who appear to have legitimate business at your plant.
- 5. Don't give out information about fellow employees.
- 6. Keep doors locked before your business officially opens and after closing time.
- 7. Always have access to communication devices so you can notify someone for help.
- 8. Some workplaces have predetermined code words so one employee can tell another about a dangerous customer or visitor without tipping off the suspect.
- 9. Wear your identification badge as instructed, and never lend your key or entry card to anyone.
- 10. Trust your instincts. They act as your early warning system.

#### Final Word

Knowing the warning signs for potentially violent behavior and precautions and actions to take in response to threats and incidents, will go a long way toward ensuring your safety and to curbing violence in your workplace