The Front Line Of Workplace Security



Safety Talk

Front desk workers have the job of greeting and directing workplace visitors. Their courteous manner and prompt service are important to the company’s public image and reputation with customers. These workers also have an important part to play in the security and safety of their company and fellow workers.

This front desk job varies among different workplaces. These duties may be carried out by the front gate guard, office receptionist, retail clerk, hospitality server, a warehouse worker taking a turn at the front counter, an admissions nurse or a lobby security monitor. The role also includes lunch break relief personnel.

In each of these jobs, the worker is the first to observe and interact with the people coming in. They see customers, clients, patients, vendors and delivery persons. They might also face robbers, people planning an assault, angry customers and intoxicated people wandering in off the street.

As well, they may have to deal with irate and abusive callers, pranks and threats, including bomb threats.

If your job includes front desk duties, make sure your training covers procedures for dealing with visitors who make threats or bypass your desk.

Many problems can be averted by acknowledging all visitors upon arrival, even if you don’t have time to wait on them. Make eye contact and say you will be with them shortly.

If someone tries to duck under a gate or around your station, speak clearly and firmly, asking him or her to wait. If you have a system of signing in visitors, ensure that they also sign out so there will be an accurate accounting of people in the building in case of an emergency evacuation. It may be your job to issue personal protective equipment to visitors being escorted into hazardous work areas.

You should also keep a list of emergency numbers at your work station so you can readily contact security personnel, police and other emergency responders. A copy of planned evacuation routes should also be posted at the front desk or

entry point to help emergency responders account for the people in the building.

Talk to your supervisor or your company’s safety and security office about helping you set up checklists for use in a crisis. If a call is a bomb threat, you can grab your checklist and make note of what the caller says and any identifying sounds to help investigators find the bomb and catch the caller.

Also talk to your supervisor about assigning a backup person to help if you sense a threat. You will need a signal to alert this person, such as a code word or a silent alarm.

Sometimes callers and visitors will try to obtain confidential information about employees or the company. If you are in doubt about what to say or don’t want to be rushed into saying the wrong thing, make a list of the requests and tell the person you will call him back. Then check with your supervisor.

Work with your company in developing policies and procedures for front desk security challenges. Then you can handle them calmly, confidently and competently.