Workplace Violence – Recognizing Threat Cues Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Verbal Escalation:** Raised voice, insults, sarcasm, or sudden changes in tone signal rising aggression that can quickly escalate into physical violence.
2. **Boundary Violation:** A person stepping too close, blocking exits, or invading personal space is a strong early cue of potential confrontation.
3. **Direct or Indirect Threats:** Statements like “You’ll regret this,” “Watch what happens,” or repeated complaints with hostility indicate imminent risk.
4. **Physical Agitation:** Clenched fists, pacing, rapid breathing, staring, or sudden stillness reflect a shift from frustration to possible action.
5. **Weapon Indicators:** Hands hidden in pockets, reaching into bags, or displaying objects that could be used as weapons are critical danger cues.
6. **Fixation Behavior:** When someone becomes intensely focused on a grievance, coworker, or supervisor, the risk of targeted violence increases.

STATS

- In 2020, approximately 20,050 US private sector workers experienced trauma from nonfatal workplace violence, requiring time off work, with many incidents linked to unrecognized verbal threats and harassment.
- Over 70% of Canadian workers surveyed from 2020-2021 reported experiencing at least one form of workplace harassment or violence, including threats that could have been identified early through cue recognition training.
- Verbal threats account for 45.3% of workplace violence incidents in US and Canadian healthcare settings (2020-2024), highlighting the need for better recognition of escalating cues like aggressive language.
- In Canada, workplace claims related to violence increased by 25% from 2019-2024, often involving unrecognized behaviors such as intimidation or menacing gestures that escalated to physical harm.
- 73% of US workers who experienced trauma from workplace violence in 2020 were female, with threats and harassment frequently going unreported due to lack of training on early threat cues.
- In Canadian workplaces, 61% of nurses reported serious violence issues

including verbal abuse and threats (2020-2023 data), underscoring gaps in recognizing subtle cues like hypersensitivity to criticism.