

Preventing Workplace Violence and Protecting Yourself and Others

Violence in and around workplaces is a continuously growing concern. Learning to identify warning signs and take appropriate action can prevent workplace violence. If it does occur, knowing the best ways to protect yourself and others will be critical to survival, and escape without injury.

- 1. Identify** warning signs.
- 2. Maintain** situational awareness.
- 3. Protect** yourself and others.

Identify warning signs

Adjust your state of mind so you'll react quickly and effectively in workplace violence situations.

Common warning signs

Stay alert and be aware if any warning signs related to workplace violence are occurring in your workplace or anywhere involving a coworker.

Some of the most common warning signs include:

- Job loss
- Death in the family
- Divorce or close relationship break-up
- Drug or alcohol addiction
- Threatening comments
- Talk about killing others
- Jokes about acts of violence
- Attempts to intimidate coworkers
- Verbally or physically abusive behavior
- Bizarre comments – especially if they are political or religious
- Difficulty controlling anger

Maintain situational awareness

Situational awareness is key to helping prevent workplace violence.

- **Code Green** – Even when you feel safe, always be alert and aware of what's going on around you.
- **Code Yellow** – Respond accordingly when warning signs appear.
- **Code Red** – Take action immediately when an act of workplace violence is unfolding or in progress. This includes calling 9-1-1 and providing crucial information to the operator.

Pre-plan and prepare

Take the time to pre-plan and make sure you have an action plan that includes these three steps in this order:

1. **Run** if you can.
2. **Hide** if you must.
3. **Fight** as a last resort.

Run

1. Think through several possible escape routes.
2. Take mental notes about routes that could box you in.
3. Keep large solid options between you and the assailant.

Hide

1. Think through several good hiding places.
2. Lock or barricade yourself into the hiding place if possible.
 - a. If the door opens out, use something strong, like a sturdy belt or piece of rope, and securely attach it to the door handle or knob to prevent the door from being opened.
 - b. If the door opens in, barricade it with sturdy items.
3. Once you're hidden, turn off the lights, silence your phone and darken the phone screen.
4. Be sure not to choose hiding places with moving/rotating parts; exposed, energized electrical conductors; sharp objects; hazardous atmospheres/certain confined spaces; etc.
5. Remember that almost any hiding place is better than none.

Hide or fight in a group

1. Spread out if you are hiding in a group.
2. Decide when and how the group will attack the assailant.
3. Attack from different directions.

Fight

Common objects can be turned into weapons, e.g., a wrench, piece of pipe, two-by-four, piece of rebar, fire extinguisher.