

52. Violence in U.S. Workplaces: Risk Factors and Prevention Strategies

E. Lynn Jenkins

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, United States

Violence is a substantial contributor to occupational injury and death in the U.S., and homicide has become the second leading cause of occupational injury death, exceeded only by motor vehicle crashes. Each week, an average of 20 workers are murdered and 18,000 are assaulted while at work or on duty. Nonfatal assaults result in millions of lost workdays and cost workers millions of dollars in lost wages.

Workplace violence is clustered in certain occupational settings: For example, the retail trade and service sectors account for more than half of workplace homicides and 85% of nonfatal workplace assaults. Taxicab drivers have the highest risk of workplace homicide of any occupational group. Workers in health care, community services, and retail settings are at increased risk of nonfatal assaults.

Risk factors for workplace violence include dealing with the public, the exchange of money, delivering services or goods, working late night or early morning hours, working alone, guarding valuables or property, and dealing with violent people or volatile situations. Prevention strategies for minimizing the risk of workplace violence include (but are not limited to) cash-handling policies, physical separation of workers from customers, good lighting, security devices, escort services, and employee training. A workplace violence prevention program should include a system for documenting incidents, procedures to be taken in the event of incidents, and open communication between employers and workers.

Data from a number of data sources with regard to fatal and nonfatal violence in the workplace are used to determine appropriate directions for prevention activities and future research. This review should serve as a foundation for the development of comprehensive strategies for addressing and reducing violence in the workplace. Although no definitive strategy is appropriate for all workplaces, all workers and employers should assess the risks for violence in their workplaces and take appropriate action to reduce those risks.

7th Joint Science Symposium on Occupational Safety and Health

26-29 October 1998
Hidden Valley, PA
USA



TTL-FIOH

NIOSH



Arbetslivsinstitutet

7th Joint Science Symposium on Occupational Safety and Health

26–29 October 1998
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania
United States

Arranged by

National Institute for Working Life
SE-171 84 Solna, Sweden

Institute of Occupational Health
Topeliuksenkatu 41 a A
SF-00250 Helsinki, Finland

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
4676 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, Ohio 45226-1998
United States