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HEA-1005: Workplace Violence Training for EMS Supervisors

***36th Annual Virginia EMS Symposium
An Education for Life***

Florida Gators – A Prehistoric Experience



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GATORS

Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to provide supervisors with the knowledge to recognize potentially violent workplace situations, techniques to diffuse escalating situations and security procedures to ensure the safety of employees during violent situations.

This presentation is intended for presentation to Emergency Medical Services supervisors.

Workplace Violence History

- The most horrendous mass shooting cases (arguably workplace violence occurred at schools):
- **32 killed - April 16, 2007** - Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. A gunman, 23-year-old student Seung-Hui Cho, goes on a shooting spree killing 32 people in two locations and wounds an undetermined number of others on campus. The shooter, Seung-Hui Cho then commits suicide.
- **27 killed - December 14, 2012** - [Sandy Hook Elementary School](#) - Newtown, Connecticut. Adam Lanza, 20, guns down 20 children, ages six and seven, and six adults, school staff and faculty, before turning the gun on himself. Investigating police later find Nancy Lanza, Adam's mother, dead from a gunshot wound. The final count is 28 dead, including the shooter.

Allison and Adam



Roanoke TV Station WDBJ7 film crew were shot to death Wednesday morning (Aug. 26) while doing a live report near Smith Mountain Lake. Reporter Alison Parker, 24, and photographer Adam Ward, 27 and their guest were shot by Vester Lee Flanagan, a disgruntled ex-news reporter for the same station .

http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2015/08/shooting_live_tv_virginia_wdbj.html

<http://heavy.com/news/2015/08/vester-lee-flanagan-bryce-williams-pov-shooting-murder-video-twitter-tweet-youtube-video/>

WPV Historically

Another notably horrendous workplace violence incident occurred over 20 years ago. It was the 1986 Edmond Post Office Massacre, which was the nation's third largest mass murder committed by a single individual in a single incident. Patrick H. Sherrill, a postal worker, reported to work on August 20th, 1986 after receiving a formal reprimand the day before. Mr. Sherrill was armed with three semiautomatic pistols and ammunition. By the end of the day, Sherrill killed 14 postal workers and wounded 6 additional workers before killing himself. It was this instance of workplace violence that coined the commonly known phrase *“going postal.”*

Objectives

At the close of this session, you will be able to:

1. Explain what workplace violence is.
2. Tell how to recognize violent potential.
3. Cite techniques to diffuse potentially violent situations .
4. Describe how to respond effectively to workplace violence.
5. Cite workplace security procedures to follow to minimize the possibility of violent situations.

Workplace Violence Defined

Workplace Violence is:

An assault or other violent act/threat that occurs in or is related to the workplace and entails a substantial risk of physical or emotional harm to individuals or damage to company resources or capabilities.

Cases of Violence to EMS Crews

Australian Medic Attacked

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylyBZoXHLng>

Detroit EMS Crew Slashed

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5TqQaT1_bc

Workplace Violence Defined (cont'd)

Participants in Workplace Violence:

- Coworkers.
- External visitors or customers to the workplace.
- Former employees/coworkers.
- Family members or domestic partners.
- Bystanders on scene

Workplace Violence Defined (cont'd)

Workplace Violence is NOT:

- Annoying behavior.
- Disliking a coworker.
- A rude customer.

Questions? Comments?

Has anyone dealt with a workplace violence incident at your organization you'd like to share with the group?

Oklahoma City Paramedic Supervisor Attacked by Road Rage/Demented Citizen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgTshESqXcE>

Recognizing Violent Potential

It can be very difficult to know when a person is going to be violent. While not all people will show the following signs, these types of behaviors and physical signs can serve as warning signs that a situation could turn violent.

One warning sign may not be a particularly strong predictor of violence but numerous warning signs increase the potential for violence.

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont'd)

History of Violence:

- Fascination with weapons, acts of violence or both.
- Demonstrated violence towards inanimate objects.
- Evidence of earlier violent behavior.

Threatening Behavior:

- States intention to hurt someone.
- Holds grudges.
- Excessive behavior (phone calls, gift giving, obsessions).
- Preoccupation with violence.

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont'd)

Intimidating Behavior:

- Argumentative.
- Displays unwarranted anger.
- Uncooperative, impulsive, easily frustrated.
- Challenges peers and authority figures.

Increase in Personal Stress:

- An unreciprocated romantic obsession.
- Serious family or financial problems.
- Recent job loss.

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont'd)

Negative Personality Characteristics:

- Suspicious of others.
- Sense of entitlement.
- Unable to take criticism.
- Feels victimized.

Marked Changes in Mood or Behavior:

- Extreme or bizarre behavior.
- Irrational beliefs or ideas.
- Appears depressed or has heightened anxiety.
- Marked decline in work performance.

Recognizing Violent Potential (cont'd)

Socially Isolated:

- History of negative interpersonal relationships.
- Few family or friends.
- Views the workplace as a home and coworkers are “family”.
- Has obsessive involvement in his or her job.

My Parking Space!!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHlIPBt868E>

What stands out to you about this case?

How do you feel Mark's co-workers handled it?

Did the HR Manager handle the counseling conversation with Mark effectively?

Is there something you would have done differently if you were in her shoes knowing the signs of potentially violent workplace behavior?

Case Discussion

Using the situations that we discussed earlier, were any of these warning signs present? Did you recognize them? Did you act on them?

Techniques to Diffuse Violence

How to spot an aggressive situation:

- Speaking loudly, frantically or quickly.
- Gesturing wildly.
- Aggressive stances and gestures such as pointing, getting close, clinching fists.
- Making threats and personal insults.

Techniques to Diffuse Violence (cont'd)

Some violent situations cannot be stopped; however, there are proven techniques that you can use and steps that can be taken to reduce a situation that is escalating.

Things to do when dealing with a potentially violent person:

- Assess the situation in your mind.
- Project calmness.
- Be patient, empathetic and encourage the person to talk.
- Focus your attention on the person so they feel that you are interested in what they have to say.
- Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture, position yourself at a right angle instead of directly in front of the person.
- Ask for small specific favors, such as if you could talk in a quieter area.
- Be reassuring and point out choices.
- Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked.

Techniques to Diffuse Violence (cont'd)

Actions to avoid when dealing with a potentially violent situation:

- Do not be the hero. Your focus should be diverting the aggressive individual and keeping others safe without putting yourself in harm's way.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not make physical contact with the individual.

Local Case Discussion

Has anyone used the techniques that we've just discussed? If so, how? What was the outcome?

Responding Effectively to Workplace Violence

After a violent incident has occurred in your workplace, it is important to immediately begin to work with your staff to heal and move on.

- Step 1 : Immediate Recovery
- Step 2: Evaluation
- Step 3: Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Responding Effectively to Workplace Violence (cont'd)

Anyone who experiences a crisis first hand, will go through the following stages in varying degrees. It is important to recognize what stage your employees are in so that you can provide empathy and understanding.

Step 1: Immediate Recovery

- Stage 1: Employee experiences emotions such as shock, disbelief, denial or numbness. Physically, the employee is in “fight or flight” mode. Heart rate, sensory perception and adrenaline levels are increased.

Step 1: Immediate Recovery (cont'd)

- Stage 2: Commonly called the “impact” stage, where the employee may feel a variety of intense emotions including anger, fear, rage, grief, sorrow, guilt or depression. This stage may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months.
- Stage 3: The reconciliation stage. The employee tries to make sense of the event, understand its impact, and reach closure of the event.

Step 2: Evaluation

- During this step, you should review the incident to determine if everything was done that could have been done to prevent the incident from happening again.
- You should also make suggestions to upper management on improvements or a change in practices that may prevent this situation in the future.

Step 3: EAP

- Authorities and First Responders should be the first to intervene in hostile situations. After the immediate threat has been resolved, employers should refer all employee affected (directly or indirectly) by the incident to your Employee Assistance Program, CISD etc..

Questions? Comments?

(The following is a sample question for the presenter to pose. It should be removed from the slide before presentation.)

Does anyone have any questions on this section?

Workplace Security Procedures

Example of Implementing Procedures to Prevent Violence:

At software firm Mindbridge, they're taking no chances. At least two company officials must be present whenever an employee is fired or disciplined. The room where they meet must have an outside phone line, just in case. And after a firing, a manager with a portable phone watches until the worker drives away.

(USA Today May 9, 2002)

Workplace Security Procedures (cont'd)

Know who to Contact:

- It is important to have a plan on how to handle workplace violence situations. When developing a prevention program, it is important to know who to contact, when to contact and how to contact.
- This plan should be written and posted on desks or phones of all public company places such as reception areas and cash registers.

Workplace Security Procedures (cont'd)

Tips on How to Respond to Emergency Situations:

1. Contact local law enforcement (911) and follow their instructions.
2. If you have one, notify your company's security force.
3. Get people away from the scene as quickly as possible.
4. Secure the area if possible.
5. Stay calm.

Workplace Security Procedures (cont'd)

Develop and Review Procedures:

- Procedures for calling for help.
- Procedures for calling for medical assistance.
- Emergency escape procedures or routes.
- Identify “safe spots” within and outside the facility.
- Procedures for accounting for all employees after the event.
- Procedures to secure the work area after the event.

Workplace Security Procedures (cont'd)

Practice Makes Perfect

- It is important to practice your contact procedures and conduct workplace violence drills so that all employees are well-versed on what to do when a situation occurs.

Summary

- Workplace violence is an assault or other violent act/threat that occurs in or is related to the workplace and entails a substantial risk of physical or emotional harm to individuals or damage to company resources or capabilities.
- Workplace violence can occur from a number of sources including coworkers, customers and family members.

Summary (cont'd)

- Warning behaviors of violence may include:
 - History of violence.
 - Threatening behavior.
 - Intimidating behavior.
 - Increase in personal stress.
 - Negative personality characteristics.
 - Marked changes in mood or behavior.
 - Socially isolated.

Summary (cont'd)

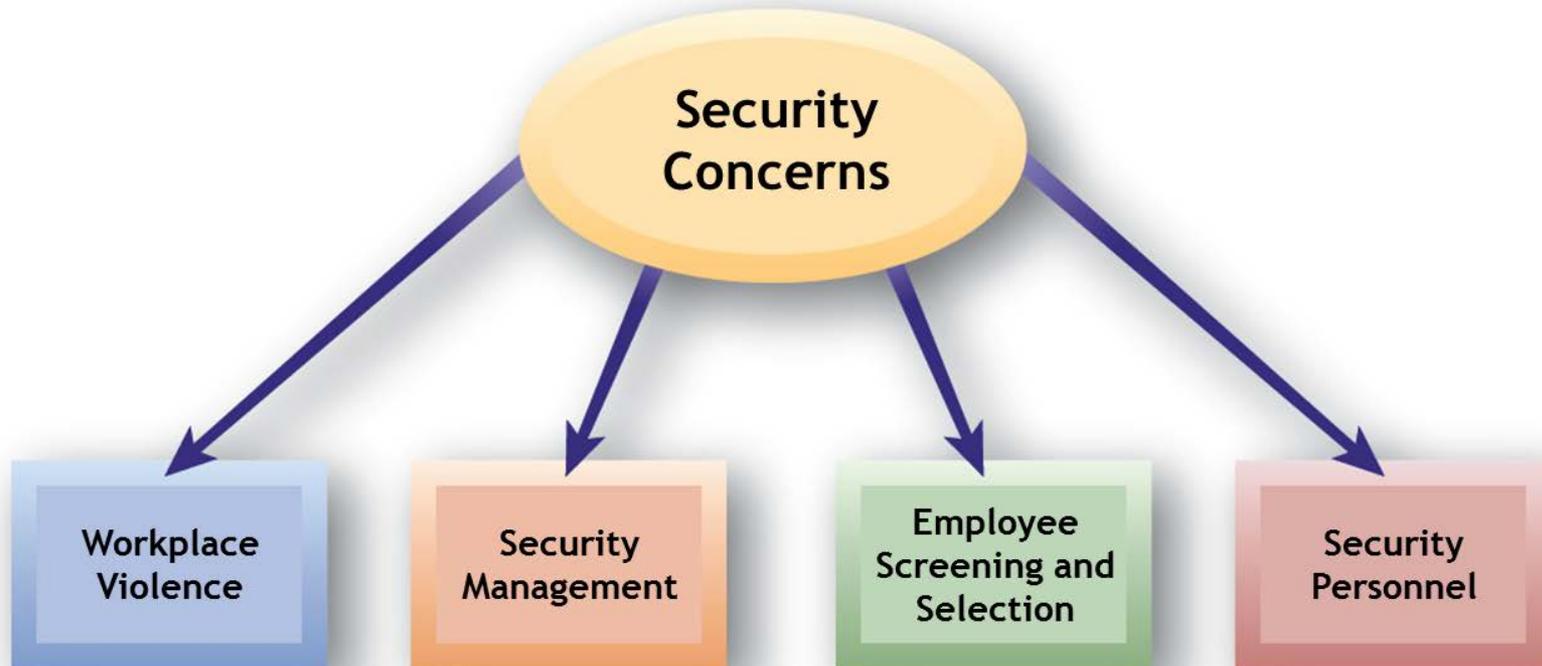
- Tips for diffusing escalating situations:
 - > Assess the situation in your mind.
 - > Project calmness.
 - > Be patient, empathetic and encourage the person to talk.
 - > Focus your attention on the person so they feel that you are interested in what they have to say.
 - > Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture, position yourself at a right angle instead of directly in front of the person.
 - > Ask for small specific favors, such as if you could talk in a quieter area.
 - > Be reassuring and point out choices.
 - > Arrange yourself so that your exit is not blocked.

Summary (cont'd)

- Recovering after an incident
 - > Immediate Recovery
 - Three stages – Emotional, Impact and Reconciliation
 - > Evaluation
 - > EAP
- Developing Violence Prevention Procedures:
 - > Know who to contact.
 - > Practice makes perfect.
 - > Develop and review procedures.

Questions? Comments?

Security Concerns at Work



Workplace Violence

- Workplace violence warning signs
 - There are warning signs and characteristics of potentially violent persons at work that should be recognized by employees
- **Workplace incivility** and bullying
 - Rude behavior by ill-mannered coworkers or bosses makes the targets of incivility feel annoyed, frustrated, or offended

Workplace Violence

- Violence that begins at home with family or friends can spill over into the workplace
 - Can disrupt the workplace and create a negative work environment for all parties involved
- Dealing with workplace violence
 - Develop policies and practices for trying to prevent and respond to it
 - Organizations can have a violence response team to respond to violence more efficiently

Figure 14.11 - Profile of Potentially Violent Employees

Characteristics of Potentially Violent Employees

- ◆ Temper/anger
- ◆ Visible frustration
- ◆ Exhibits strain or distress
- ◆ Tend to be a loner
- ◆ Work is sole major activity
- ◆ History of aggression
- ◆ Past violent behavior
- ◆ Holds obsessive grudges
- ◆ Telephone/e-mail harassment
- ◆ Stalking other employees

Negative Behaviors

- ◆ Verbal threats
- ◆ Blaming others
- ◆ Conflict with others
- ◆ Intimidation
- ◆ Behavior change
- ◆ Upset over minor injustices
- ◆ Bullying other employees
- ◆ Counterproductive actions

Security Management

- **Security audit:** HR staff conduct a comprehensive review of organizational security
- **Controlled access -** Controlling access to the physical facilities of the organization

Security Management

- Violence training - Managers, HR staff members, supervisors, and employees should be trained on:
 - How to recognize the signs of a potentially violent employee
 - What to do when violence occurs
 - Defensive tactics training with local LE

Employee Screening and Security Personnel

- Firms that do not screen employees may be subject to liability if an employee commits crimes later
- Providing adequately trained security personnel in sufficient numbers is a part of security management

Steps to Manage a Crisis

Pre-crisis phase

- Managers should identify how crises can be avoided through proper preparation, risk assessment, and disaster prevention

Crisis phase

- Craft a plan that enables the firm to adequately identify and respond to a crisis

Post-crisis phase

- Identify how an organization can better respond to the crisis if it ever happens again

Summary of our Objectives

We have

1. Explained what workplace violence is.
2. Discussed how to recognize violent potential in our activities.
3. Cited techniques to use to prevent and diffuse potentially violent situations .
4. Described how to respond effectively to workplace violence.
5. Cited workplace security procedures and training to follow to minimize the possibility of violent situations.

References

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Best Day for a College Football Fan



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