



TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

WORKPLACE SAFETY



Maintaining a healthy office environment requires attention to chemical hazards, equipment and work station design, physical environment (temperature, humidity, light, noise, ventilation, and space), task design, psychological factors (personal interactions, work pace, job control) and sometimes, chemical or other environmental exposures.



A well-designed office allows each employee to work comfortably without

needing to over-reach, sit or stand too long, or use awkward postures (correct ergonomic design). Sometimes, equipment or furniture changes are the best solution to allow employees to work comfortably. On other occasions, the equipment may be satisfactory but the task could be redesigned. For example, studies have shown that those working at computers have less discomfort with short, hourly breaks.

Situations in offices that can lead to injury or illness range from physical hazards (such as cords across walkways, leaving low drawers open, objects falling from overhead) to task-related (speed or repetition, duration, job control, etc.), environmental (chemical or biological sources) or design-related hazards (such as nonadjustable furniture or equipment). Job stress that results when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities or resources of the worker may also result in illness.

- When given the opportunity to have a break, employees that spend the majority of their day working on computers should ensure that these breaks are utilized.
- Adequate lighting will lessen eyestrain.

Security Safety

One of the major causes of injuries for TDCJ correctional staff is “struck against.” Needle sticks are prevalent during shakedowns and “pat searches.”



Staff is encouraged to keep in mind that the risk of coming in contact with a needle, pin or blade constantly exist and extreme caution should be exercised at all times.



Security injuries due to offender assault is a hazard that requires major preventative strategies.

- 1) Never underestimate the possible actions of any offender. Always expect the unexpected.
- 2) Work in teams and avoid “one on one” intervention as much as possible.



- 3) Keep a close watch

on your co-workers and be ready to assist at any given moment.

Parole Safety

One of the major contributing factors for assaults and injuries in the parole division is working with people whom may become confrontational.



- When going out on "home visits" ensure that :
- Someone always knows your destination and time schedule.
- Keep your cell phone on and accessible at all time. 
- Park in lighted and visible areas.
- Avoid working late hours in high-crime areas.
- Arrange your office to give yourself quick and easy exit passage.

Although we have discussed office, security, and parole safety, there is one subject that is seldom discussed because we have the attitude that it want happen here or to us. That subject is **Workplace Violence**. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health Department (NIOSH) each week in

the United States an average of 20 workers are murdered and 18,000 workers are assaulted while at work. Workplace Violence has emerged as a critical Safety and Health hazard. While workplace violence was once confined to a few specific industries, it now affects business of every size and type. Recent studies have shown that workplace violence:

- Affects one out of every 4 full time American workers each year. (Northwestern National Life Insurance)
- Is the leading cause of occupational death for women and the third leading cause of occupational death for all workers. (NIOSH)
- Claims more lives each year than drunk driving (US Surgeon General)
- Cost industry over \$4 billion dollars a year. (National Safe Workplace Institute)
- Is the fastest growing crime being tracked by the FBI.

Defining workplace violence has generated considerable discussion. Some would say include in the definition any language or actions that make a person uncomfortable in the

workplace, while others would include threats and harassment, but we all can agree that a reasonable working definition would be: violent acts, including physical assaults, threats of assaults, that are directed towards a person at work or on duty. Most studies to date have focused primarily on physical injuries, since they are clearly defined and easily measured.

One key to preventing violence in the Workplace is let it be known that threats of any kind **will not be tolerated**, education of the employees on early warning signs and intervention such as referral to the Employee Assistance Program.. The phone number is: 1-866-862-5927



Early Warning Signs:

- Change in a person's productivity
- Impact on supervisor's time
- Attendance problems
- Frequent conflict with Co-workers
- Violation of safety rules
- Stress in personal life
- Destruction of property
- Blaming others for problems
- Substance abuse
- Strong interest in weapons
- Deterioration in hygiene

- Concentration problems
- Erratic work patterns
- Unusual behavior
- Depression

Remember, these are merely warning signs. Many employees have one or more of these signs and don't become violent. However these do indicate that the employee may need referral to the Employee Assistance Program

What can you do?

- Recognize warning signs
- Notify someone immediately
- Know your co-workers
- Always be aware of your surroundings

THE FIRST STEP IN PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IS ACKNOWLEDGING THAT IT EXISTS.



Remember that being safe at work means you are able to spend Valentine's Day with your loved ones.



Have a safe and
Happy Valentine's Day

From the Risk Management
Department



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