

NAWIC

The National Association of
Women in Construction

Safety & Health Awareness Committee

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April Is National Workplace Violence Awareness Month

It is alarming and heartbreaking that workplace violence has its own national campaign, and that campaign has its own month. Every year, **millions** of American workers report being victims of workplace violence. In 2020, of the millions of incidents, 20,050 resulted in injuries and 392 resulted in fatalities. The risk of workplace violence increased during the pandemic because it intensified feelings of stress and created uncertainty about the future for many, including employers, workers, customers, and clients. Workers were threatened and assaulted as businesses implemented new disease prevention policies and practices. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines workplace violence as any type of violence or threat of violence against workers. It generally occurs in the workplace but can also happen away from it. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reports that workplace violence falls into four categories: Criminal intent, customer/client, worker-on-worker and **personal relationship, which overwhelmingly targets women.**

Although workplace violence can be random, it is important to know the warning signs of behaviors in coworkers that might signal future violence:

- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs.
- Unexplained absenteeism, change in behavior, or decline in job performance.
- Depression, withdrawal, or suicidal comments.
- Resistance to changes at work, persistent complaining about unfair treatment, or violation of company policies.
- Emotional responses to criticism, mood swings, and paranoia.

Managers and safety professionals at every workplace should develop a policy on violence that includes:

- Employee training and creating an emergency action plan
- Conducting mock training exercises with local law enforcement
- Adopting a zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence.

In the event of an active workplace violence event, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recommends that although panic will set in, it is best to remain as calm as possible and exercise one of three options: Run, hide, or fight.

- If there is an accessible escape route, leave your belongings and run.
- If evacuation is not possible, find a hiding place where you won't be trapped should the assailant find you, lock and blockade the door, and silence your phone.
- As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate the assailant by throwing items, improvising weapons and yelling.

Most every "place" is somebody's workplace. So, whether you are a patron or an employee, it is important to be alert and have a plan. You can find more resources at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/enews/>.



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