



Brown Bagger

answer: Contact with the public. All of these industries consistently have contact with a large number of people, customers, patients, or students. Factors that place an organization at risk include: exchanging money with the public, working alone or in small numbers, working late at night or early in the morning, working in the community (police or taxi cab drivers) and providing services to high risk clients (hospitals, social services).

A second and important source of violence in the workplace is threat from co-workers. In these cases, the violence is often a culmination of frustration coming from perceived unfairness or unsolvable problems in the workplace. The employee suffers extreme tension or anxiety because of traumatic event or perceived unsolvable problems. That employee begins to focus more exclusively on him/her self and his problems. Self-preservation and self-protection become the person's sole objectives and eventually a violent act may be perceived to be the only way out.

Third and finally, a spouse or family member of an employee can bring violence into your workplace. Domestic violence, brought into the workplace, can be a real source of danger. While not necessarily an intended target of violence, any employee can become a victim in this situation.

What causes a person to become aggressive or violent?

In a word....frustration. People don't just snap. Often a violent incident is the culmination of many days or weeks of unanswered frustration. A person may try a number of very appropriate strategies to deal with a concern but see little or no improvement in their situation. Often their frustra-

tion is a reasonable response to a particularly challenging situation. Conflict triggers include:

- Deadlines and pressures
- Unresolved accumulated gripes
- Changes and expectations of the employee out of their comfort zone
- Increased responsibility
- Loss of a role, loss of security
- Withholding recognition or rewards
- Feeling threatened by others
- Lack of clear communication
- Breach of trust, inconsistency in dealing with workplace issues
- Perception of unfairness

Employees may deal effectively with many conflict triggers but over time, if issues are not addressed, they may find it more difficult to cope appropriately. As stress increases as work, conflict becomes more likely. The more conflict employees must cope with, the greater potential for aggression and violence.

What is violence in the workplace?

In the early stages, violence in the workplace can be subtle. Treatment of others in an inappropriate or demeaning way is frequently the beginning of a pattern and escalation of behavior that can escalate to physical violence. Violence is often an attempt to gain or regain control. Behavior can be easily understood on a continuum.

- **Continuum of Aggression** —————
- intimidation
 - provoking of anger
 - rough language
 - exertion of force
 - violence

Notice that on the left side of the continuum, behavior is more likely to be verbal.