

HEMIC CONNECTION

WORKERS' COMPENSATION RESOURCE FOR HAWAII'S EMPLOYERS / VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

The Cold
Hard Facts

Violence
Prevention

Safety in
Numbers



THE WAR ON

WORKPLACE

VIOLENCE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Members,

In recent years, the increase of violence within the American workplace has become an alarming trend. A dock worker shoots his supervisor. An Internet company's employee opens fire on co-workers. In Hawaii, the tragedies at Xerox Corporation and the more recent murders of a waitress on Kauai, convenience store owner in Waimanalo, sales clerk at Ala Moana Center have brought the issue to the forefront.

Not all violence hits the front page. Threats, stalkings and harassment can go practically unseen except by those directly involved.

Our goal at HEMIC is to help you manage risk, from both inside and outside your company. We can assess potential problems and assist in creating solutions that balance the need for protection with the need for appropriate psychological care.

In addition, our representatives will suggest ways to improve the physical safety of your facility and offer recommendations on how to reduce the potential for crime.

The most important step you can take in preventing workplace violence is to be proactive. At the end of this newsletter, you will find information on HEMIC Seminar Module 2: Stress Management and Violence in the Workplace. We highly recommend this class to all policyholders.

Workplace violence won't go away, but its impact can be reduced with careful planning. Let's work together to make Hawaii a safer place to work.

SINCERELY,

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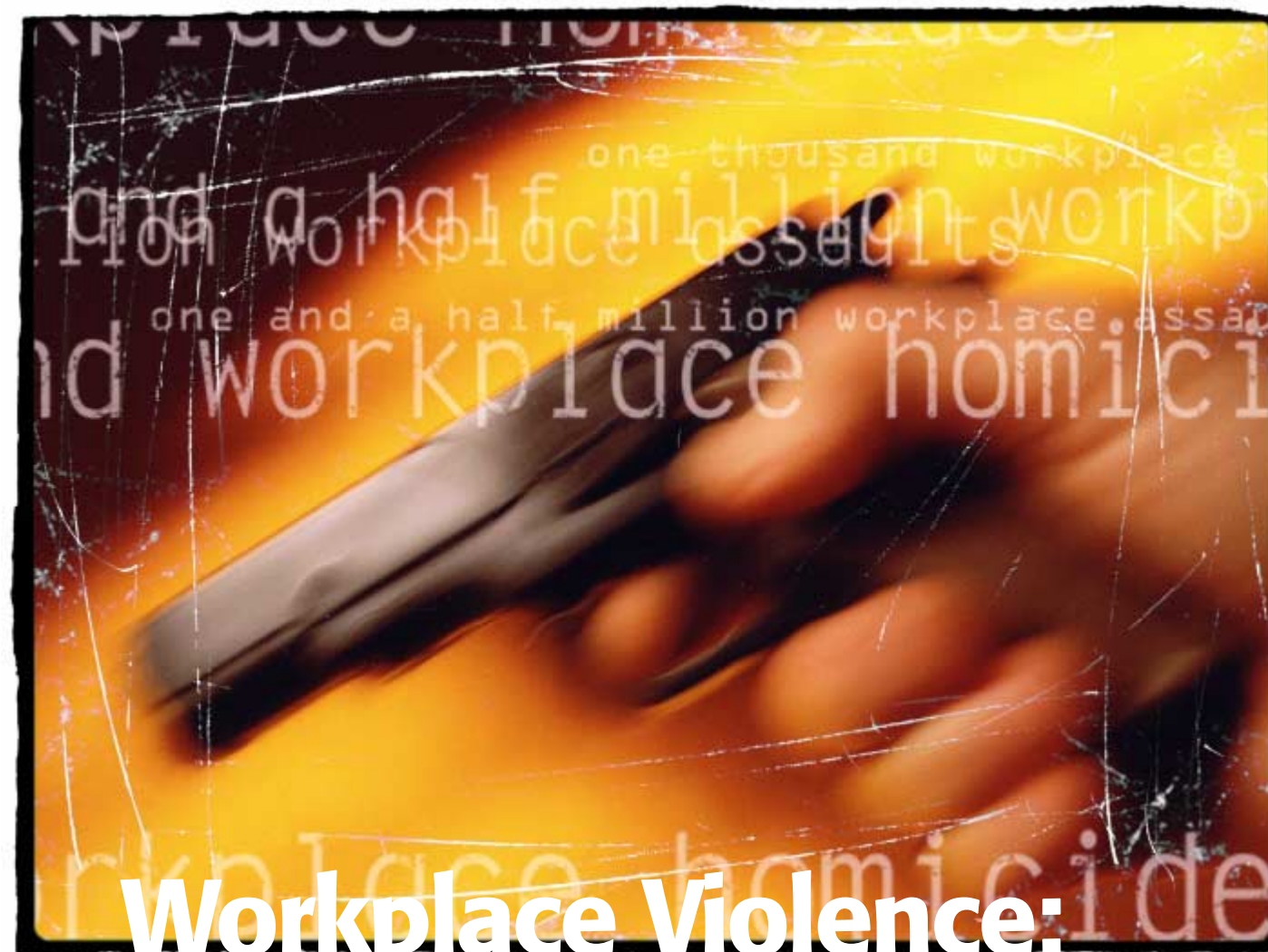
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QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Are there questions and ideas you'd like to share? Please write us at HEMIC Connection P.O. Box 3376, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96801 or send email to info@hemic.com.



Workplace Violence: The Cold Hard Facts

"Workplace violence has emerged as an important safety and health issue in today's workplace. Its most extreme form, homicide, is the second leading cause of fatal occupational injury in the United States. Nearly 1,000 workers are murdered, and 1.5 million are assaulted in the workplace each year.

According to the BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), there were 709 workplace homicides in 1998, accounting for 12% of the total 6,026 fatal work injuries in the United States."

— OSHA, JULY 29, 2000

Nearly 1,000 workers are murdered, and 1.5 million are assaulted in the workplace each year.

Workplace violence is the second leading cause of fatal occupational injury in the United States (second only to automobile accidents).

709 workplace homicides were committed in 1998, accounting for 12% of the total 6,026 fatal work injuries in the United States.

Redefining workplace safety

Workplace safety and health hazards have traditionally been viewed as unsafe work practices, hazardous industrial conditions, or

exposures to harmful chemical, biologic or physical agents—not violent acts committed by other human beings.

Recently though, employees, supervisors and managers, have become all too frequent victims of assaults or other violent acts in the workplace which entail a substantial risk of physical or emotional harm. Many of these assaults result in fatal injury, but an even greater number result in nonfatal injury, or in the threat of injury, which can lead to medical treatment, missed work, lost wages and decreased productivity.

From Workplace to War Zone. Is Your Organization at Risk?



Death or injury should not be a part of anyone's job description. And yet, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) states that an average of 1.5 million people are assaulted in the American workplace each year. That amounts to 4,110 people per day who are robbed, beaten, or attacked.

OSHA also states that nearly 1,000 workers didn't go home last year. They were murdered.

85% of the deaths in the workplace were due to robbery. Not surprisingly, the most dangerous occupations are those that are at risk for robbery: people who work independently or in small groups, with high public contact, and late night or early morning hours. The most numerous victims were retail sales people, police, private security guards and taxi drivers, in that order.

10% of the workplace deaths were the result of co-worker violence.

Is your company prepared? Can you identify the warning signs?

Experts agree that violence in the workplace is a result of growing stress at home and/or in the workplace. If the person is not able to effectively manage the stress, their frustration may eventually surface in the form of violence. These attacks can range from insubordination and threats to arson, suicide and even murder.

Experts have identified critical incidents that indicate a situation could potentially lead to violence. They may include: a refusal to follow company policy, antagonism towards customers, verbalized desires to injure coworkers and or superiors and actual threats of a sexual or violent nature. Unfortunately, these incidents are too often ignored by management and co-workers—until it is too late.

You should also be aware of signs that indicate a potentially dangerous employee such as: frequent absenteeism, angry outbursts/or sullen withdrawal, extreme disorganization, threats, history of violent behavior, defensive when criticized (blames

others for mistakes), discussion of or carrying of concealed weapon, low self-esteem, doesn't accept responsibility, obsessive preoccupation with job; very few outside interests.

Even if a problem situation doesn't lead to violence, it can take a toll on your business in the form of lower productivity, reduced profitability, poor morale, increased absenteeism, higher sick leave costs, faster personnel turnover and strained management-employee relationships.

Let's say you identify an employee who exhibits these signs. What can you do? First, call your HEMIC representative. Your HEMIC representative will help you evaluate the situation and inform you on how to proceed.

For instance, it may be that your employee is experiencing difficulties outside of the workplace such marital problems or an illness in the family that is causing unusual behavior. In this case, a leave or absence or counseling may be all that is needed. On the other hand, a careful investigation may reveal that the employee has a violent history and may be a substance abuser, in which case your HEMIC representative will assist you in taking appropriate precautions.

And even if you are not concerned about your current situation, it's always a good idea to create written policies that address the consequences of fighting, harassment and violence.

When domestic violence comes to work

Domestic violence is not limited to the confines of the home. All too often a place of employment can provide a predictable time and location where a victim can be stalked, harassed, and in extreme cases, attacked. Although victims often don't feel comfortable sharing their personal problems with co-workers and supervisors, doing so could save their lives.

As an employer, what can you do? If your employee is being harassed by someone who is potentially dangerous, notify your HEMIC representative

immediately. Your representative will document the incidents and help you take precautions to protect the victim, co-workers and customers. These steps may include notifying the police, changing the employee's work schedule, rearranging desk locations or relocating the employee to another location.

If your employee is an abuser, your HEMIC representative can also advise you on how to prepare for violent situations that could erupt at work.

Domestic violence is a problem that must be addressed in a timely, appropriate

manner. To learn what you can do to prevent abuse, call your HEMIC representative or the hotlines listed below.

24-hour Domestic Violence Hotlines

Honolulu/Leeward Oahu: 841-0822
 Windward Oahu: 528-0606
 Big Island - West Hawaii: 322-SAFE
 East Hawaii: 959-8864
 Kauai: 245-8404
 Lanai: 244-2330
 Maui: 579-9581
 Molokai: 567-6888



Violence Prevention Checklist

The most effective way to prevent violence from occurring is to be proactive. Take a few minutes to review the points below. It's also a good idea to ask your HEMIC representative for recommendations specific to your business.

Is your organization at risk?

The statistics are alarming. According to NIOSH (June 1996), 71% of workplace homicides were robbery-related. 76% of homicides involved a firearm. The following nine factors increase the risk of violence.

- Contact with the public
- Exchange of money
- Delivery of passengers, goods, or services
- Having a mobile workplace such as a taxicab or police cruiser
- Working with unstable or volatile persons in health care, social service, or criminal justice settings
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working late at night or during early morning hours
- Working in high-crime areas
- Guarding valuable property or possessions

Stop crime before it happens.

Prevention is the best medicine. If you checked off any of the factors in the preceding article, the next two sections are especially important for you to read. By implementing the following recommendations you can reduce your risk and make your establishment less attractive to robbery or attack.

- Improve visibility by providing adequate lighting and installing mirrors; keep signs and shelves low.
- Install drop safes and signs that indicate little cash is kept on-hand.
- Maintain video surveillance.
- Provide silent and personal alarms.
- Establish emergency procedures including communications systems, training and education.
- Restrict customer access by reducing store

hours and closing portions of a store.

- Take precautions when going to remote, isolated spots such as garbage areas and outdoor freezers.
- Lock doors not in use.
- Increase staffing during high-risk periods.
- Install bullet-resistant enclosures.

During a Robbery

- If you are robbed at gunpoint, don't panic. Stay calm and speak to the robber in a cooperative tone. Do not argue or fight with the robber and offer no resistance whatsoever.
- Hand over the money.
- Never ever pull a weapon during the event—it will only increase your chances of getting hurt.
- Always move slowly and explain each move to the robber before you make them.

Post-Event Measures

- Make no attempt to follow or chase the robber.
- Stay where you are until you are certain the robber has left the immediate area, then lock the door of your store and call the police immediately.
- Do not touch anything robber has handled.
- Write down everything you remember about the robber and the robbery while you wait for the police to arrive.
- Do not open the door of the store until the police arrive.

Safety in Numbers

Just because you have a small business and you think you know each employee doesn't mean you're protected from workplace violence. In fact, small companies often face greater risks. Here's why:

For starters, most large companies have strict hiring policies. They may require drug tests and extensive job references. Smaller businesses, on the other hand, tend to be more informal in their hiring practices which can make it easier for a substance abuser or person with a less-than-satisfactory job history to gain employment.

Recommendation: Standardize your hiring practices to include substance abuse testing and pre-employment screening.

Another risk for small companies is the lack of policies regarding fighting, violence, harassment and other issues. When the owner of the company doubles as the human resources department, it's easy to overlook the need for strict guidelines regarding the consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Recommendation: Have written policies and review them with new and current employees.

Lax management and termination practices can also increase the potential for anger and resentment. If managers do not have good supervisory skills, employees may not be fully aware of the quality of their performance. In addition, managers without proper skills with respect to employee termination may increase the risk of violence or lawsuits.

Recommendation: Create a standardized performance rating that can be reviewed with all employees on a regular basis. If an employee is having difficulty performing his or her duties, provide a legitimate opportunity for improvement. If an employee must be terminated, handle it fairly and with compassion. It is also a good idea to consult your HEMIC representative or legal representative if you have any questions regarding employer and employee rights.

HEMIC Seminar Module 2

Stress Management and Violence in the Workplace

Stress claims in Hawaii are at an all time high. The top five causes of stress in the workplace that result in workers compensation claims are supervisor - employee conflicts, personal problems, poor performance, employee - employee conflicts, and harassment.

As an employer, you straddle a fine line between protecting the rights of a potentially dangerous employee and his or her potential victim. Timely, accurate assessment of the situation can help determine whether an

employee is unbalanced and may require appropriate medical or psychological treatment, or if a conflict is the result of a "normal" disagreement and can be resolved amicably.

HEMIC's Module 2 will help you recognize specific risk factors and take appropriate precautions to protect your employees and customers against workplace violence. This seminar is designed for all industries and applications.

We recommend all policyholders participate in this program. 3 hours.

For more information on workplace violence, contact your HEMIC representative and visit these websites:

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - VIOLENCE
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/violenpg.html>

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - STRESS
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/stresshp.html>

Occupational Safety & Health Administration, U.S. Dept. of Labor
<http://www.osha-slc.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/>



HEMIC FRAUD HOTLINE

If you suspect an employee or co-worker is receiving workers' compensation benefits due to a fraudulent claim, call the hotline today. All calls are strictly confidential.

On Oahu Call
522-5279

Neighbor Islands Toll Free
1-888-522-5295

**Protect your business and your employees.
Report all injuries within 24-hours.**



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