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When Violence Shows Up at Work
Steve Hinds, Principal @ Hindsight

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When Violence Shows Up at
Work

Hindsight

STEVE HINDS - PRINCIPAL

Introduction

- Steve Hinds
 - Bachelors in Counseling and Psychology with Masters in Business.
 - Primary background is in Human Resources and Organizational Behavior.
 - Began working in the field of violence in the workplace in 1999.
 - Have actively worked with organizations to help them respond to violence.

What is workplace violence?

- “Workplace violence is violence or the threat of violence against workers. It can occur **at or outside the workplace** and can range from **threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide**, one of the leading causes of job-related deaths.” - OSHA

Types of violence

- **Type 1 – Criminal Intent**
- **Type 2 – Employee and Customer or Client**
- **Type 3 – Employee and Employee or Employer**
- **Type 4 – Personal Relationship**
- **Type 5 – Active Shooter**

- **Stages of Violence**

Type 1 Violence
Criminal intent

- Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace, but enter to commit robbery or another crime.
- Particular group of vulnerable employees:
 - Taxi drivers
 - Late-night retail – Liquor Stores
 - Gas station clerks
 - Isolated neighborhoods
 - Those who carry cash
- Majority of workplace homicides (85%) fall into this group
 - +/- 700 per year.

TYPE 2 violence
Customer/client

- Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or any others for whom an organization provides services.
- May be absolutely no warning.
- Violent reactions by a customer or client are unpredictable, triggered by:
 - An argument or anger at the quality of service or denial of service, delays, or some other precipitating event.
 - Psychological or psychiatric issues.
 - Alcohol or other substance abuse.

Training is crucial

21st On September, 2016 I was asked to train 65 field employees with Chugach Electric.

Two days later, this Type II incident, involving Chugach contractors took place.



An Anchorage police armored vehicle waits near a Hillside home on Grammi Street on Thursday morning, where shots have been fired at officers and a barricaded subject has resisted at least three gas deployments. (Marc Lester / Alaska Dispatch News)

Customer / Client

Continued

- Police Officer, Correctional Officer, Security Guards, and Mental Health Workers.
- Social Workers who deal with domestic violence and child custody.
- Anyone having to deny services to a client or potential client.
- Doctors, nurses and emergency medical response teams; and hospital employees working in admissions, emergency rooms, and crisis or acute care units.
- Others that I have been involved with:
 - Animal Control Workers
 - Customer Service employees
 - Electrical linemen
 - Flight Attendants

TYPE 3 Violence

Employee to Employee or Employer

- Violence against coworkers by a present or former employee.
- Typically develop over time.
- Warning sign - observable behavior.
 - Some times ignored for long periods of time.
 - People adjust to the bad behavior.
 - "That's just Walter, he is just like that"

Risk Factors

- Risk factors associated with potential violence include:
 - Personality conflicts.
 - Grudge over a real or perceived grievance.
 - Mishandled disciplinary action.
 - Termination.
 - Excessive drug or alcohol use.
- Risks from employee's personal circumstances.
 - Breakup of relationship.
 - Financial or legal problems.
 - Emotional disturbance.
 - Other family conflicts.

Understand Attack behavior

- There is no agreed upon profile for violent individuals.
- Violent individuals behavior is based on:
- A history of attack behavior:
 - Bullying – bully or bullied
 - Threats
 - Intimidation
 - Hostile behavior
 - Escalation

Stages Preceding Attack

- Person perceives some trigger event.
- Person has history of “attack” behavior.
- Comes up with idea to do harm to others.
- Develops a plan to carry out their idea.
- Focuses or obsesses on the idea.
- Builds more and more negative energy.
- Acquires or secures means to do harm.
- “Rehearses” plan.
- Implements the attack.

Altering Behavior

- Alter their behavior before they take action
- Change the direction of their actions
 - Employee with history of “attack” behavior
 - Everyone says, “Oh, that’s just Walter. He is just like that”
 - Intervene with Walter now
- You need to put a tree in the middle of their road so they cannot continue in the same direction
- The intent is to de-energize the person.
- It takes them out of control.

Be Alert for Signs

| | |
|--|---|
| • Ominous, specific threats. | • Homicidal/suicidal comments or threats. |
| • Increasing belligerence. | • Recent acquisition or fascination with weapons. |
| • Hypersensitivity to criticism. | • Preoccupation with violent themes. |
| • Apparent obsession with a supervisor or coworker | • Interest in recently publicized violent events. |
| • Employee grievance. | • Noticeable changes in behavior. |
| • Outbursts of anger. | |
| • Extreme disorganization. | |

Types of Threats

- Direct
 - Identifies a very specific target. Straightforward, clear and explicit.
 - "I am going home and getting my AK47 and will even the score."
- Indirect
 - More vague, unclear and ambiguous. Hard to identify the plan, victim, etc.
 - "I know where you live."
 - "You drive that green Honda, don't you?"
 - Person looking at photo in your office – "Those are your kids, aren't they?"

**Types of Threats
(continued)**

- Veiled
 - Able to be understood yet expressed in a way that is not clear and direct, it is disguised.
 - Strongly implies but does not specifically threaten violence.
 - "Nice car you got there. It would be too bad if anything ever happened to it."
 - "With execs like we have in this organization, I can see how someone could flip out and kill someone."
- Conditional
 - If certain things happen or do not happen, violence will ensue.
 - "If I lost my job, I would come back here and even the score."

How to Respond to Veiled or Indirect Threats

- Detect, assess, and manage threats and behavior.
 - Can appear difficult to deal with.
 - Hard to prove what the individual was referring to – Sometimes no physical evidence.
- Ask – Clarifying questions.
 - What did you mean by what you just said?
- Did you do this or say this?
 - If the person answers “Yes”, continue investigation
 - If the person answers “No”
 - I’m glad to hear that you did not say that. If you had said it, it would have been serious and would have led to an investigation and possibly disciplinary behavior.

PROHIBITED BEHAVIORS

- Specifically list, but make sure to leave it open.
 - This list is not all inclusive...
 - Threats - Direct, indirect, veiled or conditional
 - Stalking
 - Possession of weapons
 - Any form of assaultive behavior
 - Behavior which can be described as disruptive, loud or appearing angry
 - Disregard for the safety and well being of others
 - Any act which a reasonable person would perceive as being a threat of violence

Reporting

If you see something, say something

- Who should report?
 - Anyone with direct knowledge.
- Who should they report to?
 - Concerns to immediate supervisor.
 - Human Resources.
 - Security personnel.
- Direct emergency –
 - Those around them.
 - 911 - 9-911 if you have to access an outside line.

What should be reported?

- The exact nature and context of the threat or threatening behavior.
- The identified target (general or specific).
- Your belief about the threatener’s apparent motivation.
- Any information relating to the threatener’s ability to carry out the threat.
- Any knowledge of the threatener’s background, including work history, criminal record, mental health history, military history, and past behavior on the job.

Internal Investigative Process

- All reports must be investigated.
- Confidentiality maintained when possible.
- Typically handled by Human Resources or consultant for internal issue.
- Develop a process for handling internal investigations
- Police for external issue or serious internal issue.
- Findings will result in some action.

Office safety

- Analyze work environment for problems.
- Control of access.
- Alert or alarm system which can be accessed by everyone.
- Use of code words which alert office mates:
 - Know when your partner is in trouble.
 - “Is Victor in the building?”
 - “Have you seen Victor?”
- Visually open meeting space when meeting with potentially risky individuals.
- Visibility Video cameras
- Arrangement of work space so employees cannot be trapped in a small enclosure.
- Adequate and clearly marked escape routes.
- Planning for disabled employees.

More of What an Organization Can Do

- Make sure that people understand what to do in the case of a violent incident.
- Publish list of warning signs for all to be aware.
- Once plan has been developed
 - Communicated
 - Practice
 - Just like the fire drill – everyone must participate.
- Evaluate the response after the drill. Look for weaknesses and develop solutions.
- Re-evaluate the plan on a regular basis. Needs will change.

Type 4 Violence
Personal Relationship

- Violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there, but has relationship with an employee—an abusive spouse or domestic partner.
 - Greatest exposure is in situations where the workplace is easily accessed by outsiders.
- Organization can assist if aware
 - Encourage culture of care
 - Identify channels to get information to the person who can do something about it

Domestic violence

- “Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation and emotional, sexual or economic abuse to control the other partner in a relationship.” - FBI
- “Stalking or other harassing behavior is often an integral part of domestic violence.” – FBI
- Phases of domestic violence:
 - Mental obsession
 - Surveillance
 - Harassment
 - Elimination

Victim intervention

- Employees facing domestic threats may tend to confide most easily in coworkers, not supervisors, managers or security
 - Be aware – if you notice something with someone you work with, ask respectfully.
- Organization may need to get involved even if the victim doesn't want help.
 - Providing safe environment to all employees
 - Harassing visits
 - Phone calls
- Refer the employee for emotional, legal, or financial counseling
 - EAP
 - Side practitioners, (e.g., AWAIC).

Type 4 - Observable Behavior of Person Being Abused

- Tardiness - unexplained absences.
- Frequent-and often unplanned-use of leave.
- Change in job performance.
- Isolated from coworkers.
- Reluctance to participate in social events.
- Discomfort when communicating with others.
- Disruptive phone calls or e-mail.
- Disruptive visits.
- Acting uncharacteristically moody, depressed, or distracted.

Observable behavior

- Sudden or unexplained requests to be moved from public locations.
- Noticeable change in use of makeup (to cover up injuries).
- Inappropriate clothes (e.g., sunglasses worn inside the building, turtleneck worn in the summer).
- Being the victim of vandalism or threats.
- Lack of concentration.
- Lack of sleep.

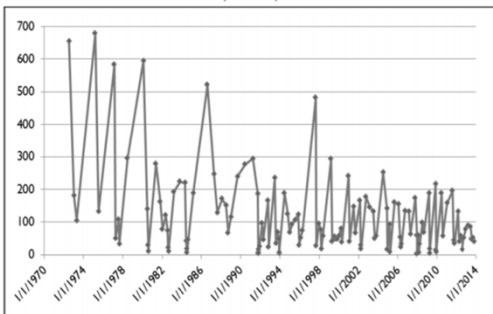
Type 5 Violence
Active Shooter

- An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.

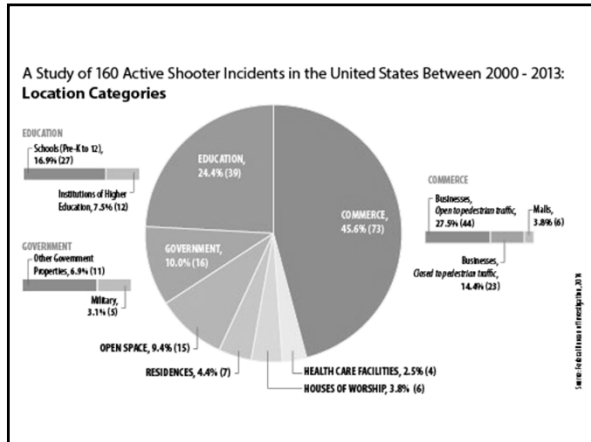
Active Shooter Data

- 160 active shooter incidents occurred between 2000 and 2013.
 - 84 events happened between 2000 and 2010.
 - Average of 8 per year.
 - 76 events happened between 2010 and 2013.
 - Average of 19 per year.
- Frequency is increasing.
 - 486 people killed; 557 injured.
 - Incidents in 40 of 50 states.
 - Does not include drug or gang violence.
- Businesses most frequently attacked (37%), followed by schools (34%) and public venues (17%).

Figure 8. Days Between Mass Public Shootings (1970-2013)



Source: CRS analysis of data provided by Grant Duwe for 1970-1998 on mass public shootings, as well as analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, press accounts, agency press releases, and other compilations by mass media and advocacy groups. This analysis is nearly identical to that which first appeared in Amy P. Cohen, Deborah Atrazel, and Matthew Miller, "Rate of Mass Shootings Has Tripled Since 2011," Harvard Research



Active Shooter

- Average active-shooter incident lasts 9 minutes.
- 37% in less than 5 minutes.
- With 43% of incidents, the crime is over before police arrive.
 - 41 cases where the situation resolved before the police arrived.
 - 16 cases the shooter was stopped by potential victims.
- Overwhelmingly, the offender is a single shooter (98%)
- Primarily male (97%).
- In 40% of the instances, they kill themselves.
- Patrol officers first to respond alone or with partner.
- When responding alone, 75% had to take unilateral action.
- 1/3 of those officers who enter the incident alone are shot by the intruder.

What does not work

- One-size-fits-all approach.
- Rigidity, inflexibility.
- Denial of problem.
- Lack of communication with key parties.
- Lack of collaboration.
- Ignoring respect.
- Lack of clear written policy.
- Lack of careful evaluation of job applicants.
- No documentation.
- Lack of awareness of cultural/diversity issues.
- Passing around "bad apples".
- Lack of an organization-wide commitment to safety.

Individual Planning

- Plan ahead
 - What would I do if an attack happened?
 - What could I use to build a barricade?
 - What could I use as a weapon?
- Disbelief
 - In some circumstances, when an event happens, people become deer in the headlights.
 - Practice enough so if disbelief happens you can quickly overcome it.
- When you notice something out of the ordinary, report it.
 - Virginia Tech – many people saw chained doors – failed to report it.
- If you hear something that sounds like it could be gunfire, take action.
- If you barricade a door, do not stand or lay down right in front of the door.

Survival

- Awareness
 - Workplace violence can affect anyone in any work setting across all levels.
 - Know work environment well enough to know when things change.
 - Where is the nearest exit?
- Preparation - Take responsibility for your own safety.
 - What would you do?
- Rehearsal
 - Mental walk through. Look for exits or hiding places.

Prepared vs Unprepared

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| •Unprepared | •Prepared |
| •Panic | •Anxious |
| •Disbelief | •Recall what to do |
| •Denial | •Follow plan |
| •Helplessness | •Commit to act |
| •Loss of time | |

First - Evacuate

- Leave as quickly as possible. Warn others to avoid the area.
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
- Leave belongings behind.
- Only attempt to move injured who can be easily moved.
- Once safe, contact emergency personnel.
- Once connected to an emergency operator, certain information, if known, should be relayed.
 - description and location of the shooter, number and types of weapons used, an estimate of the number of people in the building.

Second - Hide out

- Lock yourself in.
- Barricade the door.
- Hide behind large objects.
- Stay away from windows.
- Turn off lights.
- Become very quiet.
 - Silence cell phone completely.
- Disperse – provide fewer targets.
- If you have no other option – fight back.

Third - Take action

- Only as a last resort:
 - If you cannot get out. If you cannot hide.
- Work as a team.
- Act as aggressively as possible.
- Improvise weapons.
 - Look around your office now for what could be used.
- Yell when launching.
 - Throw the person off guard.
- Commit to your actions.

When law enforcement arrives

- Remain calm – follow instructions.
- Slowly put down anything in your hands.
- Raise hands and spread fingers.
- Keep hands visible at all times.
- Avoid quick movements toward officers.
- Avoid pointing or screaming.
- Expect law enforcement to be communicating loudly.
- They may push you to the ground for your own safety.
- Follow their instructions implicitly.
- Do not expect primary responders to take time with you.
- Help will come once you are out of harms way.

Stages of Violence

- At any time when you are dealing with someone who is upset.
 - Avoid drawing lines in the sand.
 - Use questions more than statements.
 - Leave room for options.
 - Focus on the future.
- The person that you are interacting with is energized.
 - Need to help dissipate the energy.
- Use and understand body language.
 - Reading the Tells.
 - What Every Body Is Saying – Joe Navarro.

Stage One

- Characterized as Perceiving Injustices and Actively Expressing Opposition.

Stage One – Possible Warning Signs

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Argues at times with customers, employees and management.• Distorts issues and passes those distortions to others in the form of gossip or rumors.• Does not listen well.• Fatalistic - "Who cares".• Finds fault with the actions of others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interrupts.• Occasional inappropriate language.• Places responsibility for problems on everyone else.• Rigid in approach to situations and/or people.• Takes criticism poorly.• Withdraws. |
|---|---|

Stage One – Appropriate Responses

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Things to say</u>• Encourage the person to talk.• Give them factual information.• Ask and use their name.• Smile and be friendly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Things to do</u>• Ask clarifying questions.• Listen to their concerns patiently.• Be an empathetic listener.• Be non-judgmental.• Ask for their ideas on solutions.• Report concerns to supervisor. |
|--|--|

Stage One – Inappropriate Responses

- Do not try to minimize the situation make it seem less serious or less important than it is to the individual.
- Do not make statements which discount the situation.
- Avoid saying:
 - "Don't worry about it."
 - "It's no big deal."
 - "Get over it."

Stage Two

- Characterized as Difficult and Having a Victim Mentality. Something is wrong with everything.

Stage Two – Possible Warning Signs

- Argues with co-workers constantly.
- Belligerent towards employees and others.
- Bends, changes or ignores company procedures to "get the job done".
- Bullying or harassing behavior.
- Increasingly complains of heightened stress at work and about poor working conditions.
- Continual excuses and blames others.
- Has difficulty controlling temper.
- Perceived injustices in the workplace result in disgruntled attitude.
- Feels powerless or hopeless sense of defeat.
- Impatient.
- Increasing use of inappropriate language.
- Demonstrates an overreaction to stimuli.
- Feels persecuted.
- Appears distracted.
- Makes inappropriate sexual comments.
- Tries to bait you.
- Refuses to cooperate with those in authority and to obey policies and procedures.
- Sees self as victimized by the department and the company (them against me).
- Unsure of next course of action.
- Wants to get back power.

Stage Two – Appropriate Responses – Things to Say

- Accept criticism in a neutral way.
- When a complaint may have merit, use statements like "You are possibly right", or "It may be my fault."
- If the criticism doesn't seem justified, ask clarifying questions.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings.
- Indicate that you can see that they are upset.
- Move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- Remind the person of company policies.
- Use statements like "I can see how you would feel that way."

Stage Two – Appropriate Responses – Things to Do

- Create "yes" momentum.
- Frame the context - set limits.
- Make a sincere attempt to clarify concerns.
- Project calmness.
- Relocate to a quiet location.
- Reward desired performance.
- Draw them back into facts.
- Reassure them as appropriate.
- Use neutral body language – no change or visible response when something negative is said.
- Use a teamwork approach.
- Talk with your supervisor about your concern for the individual.

Stage Two – Inappropriate Responses

- Do not criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.
- Do not take sides or agree with distortions.
- Do not argue with the individual.

Stage Three

- Characterized as Volatile and Initiating a Resolution.

Stage Three – Possible Warning Signs

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abusive.• Circular thought pattern.• Derogatory.• Direct or veiled threats of harm.• Explosive angry outbursts without provocation.• Expressions of a plan to hurt self or others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fast or rapid eye movement; may be glaring or avoiding eye contact.• Getting in someone's face over an issue.• Hostile toward everyone.• Inappropriate reactions to situations. |
|---|--|

Stage Three – Possible Warning Signs

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barely in control.• Obscene language and gestures.• Occasional rapid breathing when upset.• Poor impulse control - Temper control difficulties.• Pounding fists, pointing fingers.• Rash or impulsive behavior out of proportion to stimuli. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sabotages equipment and steals property for revenge.• Tone of voice - shouting or screaming at people.• Talks about wishes to hurt co-workers, and/or management.• Violence towards inanimate objects. |
|---|---|

Stage Three – Appropriate Responses – Things to Say

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask for recommendations.• Repeat back to the individual what you feel is being requested of you.• Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area.• Do not argue with comments made.• Do not offer solutions; discuss options. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists.• Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behaviors. State options.• Use non-directive questions, repeating back what you believe the person is saying.• Lower your voice and talk at a smooth, calm pace. |
|---|--|

Stage Three – Appropriate Responses –
Things to Do

- Allow the person to vent.
- Avoid an audience. Remove others away from the person.
- Be aware of the environment and discretely plan for ways to disengage from the individual.
- Call for assistance if possible.
- Contact a supervisor or security immediately.
- Remain calm.
- Use smoothing or downplaying hand motions.
- Maintain a relaxed posture yet keep yourself focused on the individual.
- Position yourself at a right angle to the individual rather than directly in front of them.
- Set and enforce appropriate ground rules/boundaries.
- Use delaying tactics, to give the person time to calm down. For example, offer them a cup of water.

Stage Three – Inappropriate Responses

- Avoid physical contact.
- Do not:
 - point fingers.
 - have long periods of fixed eye contact.
 - try to bargain with a threatening individual.
 - challenge, threaten or dare the individual.
 - intrude into the person's personal space.
 - make false statements to the individual.
 - make promises you cannot keep.
 - Never belittle the individual or make them feel foolish.

Stage Four

- Characterized as Violent and Taking Action.

Stage Four – Possible Warning Signs

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acts of physical harm or property damage.• Breathing rapidly.• Destruction of property.• Direct threats.• Physical actions or threats which appear imminent.• Physical altercations – assaulting others, slapping, hitting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical fights.• Suicidal threats.• Sabotage.• Stalking.• Throwing objects.• Verbally assaultive.• Very focused eye contact; glaring. |
|--|--|

Stage Four – Appropriate Responses – Things to Say

- Speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- If the person is talking in a very loud voice or shouting, do not respond in kind. Keep your voice calm.
- Ask the individual if it would be appropriate for them to lower their voice as well.

Stage Four – Appropriate Responses – Things to Do

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust your instincts. If the individual's actions are frightening to you, escape.• Secure your own safety first.• Attempt to isolate the person if it can be done safely.• Give yourself an escape route. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alert a supervisor or other employee. Contact security immediately.• Call 911. Cooperate with law enforcement.• Disengage and evacuate.• Remain calm. |
|--|--|

Stage Four – Inappropriate Responses

- Do not allow yourself to become trapped without an escape route.
- Do not try to remove weapons from the individual.
- Do not try to overpower the individual.
- Do not meet with the individual alone.

Summing up

- Better to over prepare than under prepare.
- Share this information with family, friends and co-workers.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Trust your feelings if things seem out of sort.
- Develop plans of action.
- Practice your plan.
- Call appropriate person.
- Communicate what you have observed.
- Comply with law enforcement.

Thank you

- For material
 - Alaska Dispatch News
 - Anchorage Police Department, Anita Shell
 - Anchorage Police Department, Chief Mark Mew
 - Bureau of Justice
 - Denver Post
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation
 - National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 - Society of Human Resource Management

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