

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY & GUIDELINES

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY

Nothing is more important to the City of Los Angeles than the safety and security of its employees, customers, and visitors. The City is committed to maintaining a workplace that is free from violence or threats of violence. Threats, threatening behavior, or acts of violence against an employee, a customer, a visitor, or any other individual cannot and will not be tolerated. All reports of workplace violence will be taken seriously and will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. For the purpose of this policy, the workplace is considered to be anywhere an employee is engaged in City-related business.

Any form of violence or threat of violence - whether actual or reasonably perceived - involving a City employee or occurring in the workplace must be reported to a supervisor, manager, or the department's personnel office. Such behavior must be reported whether it is committed by another City employee, a contractor, a customer, or member of the public. If management determines that an employee has engaged in workplace violence, appropriate action must be taken, which may include discipline up to and including discharge. Any violent behavior committed by an employee outside of the workplace which arises out of a contact made at the workplace may also result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Where the violent behavior occurs at the workplace, whether it is committed by a City employee or by an individual who is not a City employee, the City will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency, if necessary. Additionally, in all cases where violent behavior or a credible threat of violent behavior is directed at a City employee, the City will take appropriate legal action and/or other steps necessary to help protect the employee and/or the employee's family members.

An employee should also report the existence of any restraining order that covers the employee at the workplace or any potentially violent nonwork-related situation that could likely result in violence in the workplace. Under such circumstances, management will take appropriate precautions to help protect its employees in the workplace.

The types of behavior covered by this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Violent physical actions
- Direct or implied threats to do harm to another or to property (including intimidating use of one's body or physical objects)
- Verbally abusive or intimidating language or gestures
- Threatening, abusive, or harassing communication (e.g., phone calls, letters, memoranda, faxes, e-mail)
- Unauthorized possession of a weapon at the workplace (including on City parking lots)
- Destructive or sabotaging actions against City or personal property
- Engaging in a pattern of unwanted or intrusive behavior against another (e.g., stalking, spying, following)
- Violation of a restraining order

This policy will accomplish its objectives only with the open and full support of management at all levels throughout the City. Accordingly, each department is directed to develop and implement a plan and provide training programs to prevent and appropriately respond to incidents of violence. Additionally, each department shall communicate workplace violence-prevention and violence-management techniques to staff on a regular basis and insure that appropriate security measures are implemented to minimize the likelihood of violence occurring.

Full cooperation by all employees is necessary if the City is to maximize the safety and security of its employees, customers, and visitors. The City will not tolerate retaliation against any employee who reports workplace violence or a threat of violence.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION GUIDELINES

In accordance with sound employment practice and State law, the City of Los Angeles has adopted its Workplace Violence Policy. This policy commits the City to taking reasonable actions to develop and maintain a workplace that is free from violence or the threat of violence. The best strategy to achieve a violence free workplace is to prevent violence or the threat of violence before it occurs in the work environment. The effective prevention of violence requires the consistent commitment of all employees, supervisors and managers. Employees should be encouraged to immediately communicate to supervision any work related, or non-work related situation that has the potential to create violence in the workplace. Supervisors and managers must take all reports of potential violence seriously, investigate promptly and take appropriate actions to minimize and eliminate the potential for violence in the workplace. The City can effectively reduce the potential for violence in the workplace only through the ongoing development and maintenance of the highest levels of communication between employees and managers. City departments should implement the concepts in the following guidelines to achieve an effective workplace violence prevention program.

COORDINATION OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Each City department should identify a Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator. The position will be responsible for the development, implementation, evaluation and modification of the department's workplace violence prevention program. The Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator should be the department's personnel officer or a senior manager with the authority to implement policies on a department-wide basis.

The Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator, as a member of the Department's Threat Assessment Team, (refer to attachment III) will be responsible for reviewing all reports of threats or acts of violence to identify areas for improvement in the department's security, training, and communication programs. The Coordinator may seek technical assistance from members of the City's Threat Assessment Team, Department of General Services Security Services and employee organizations to identify and implement the elements of an effective prevention program.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION TRAINING

Each City department should conduct general and work environment specific training on methods and techniques to prevent violence or the threat of violence in the workplace.

General workplace violence prevention training may include, but not be limited to: awareness of the City's Workplace Violence Policy, methods for defusing hostile or potentially threatening situations, awareness of basic behavioral indicators that could lead to violent acts, communications procedures for reporting potentially violent situations or individuals, methods for assessing security in the workplace and awareness of Employee Assistance Programs.

Work environment specific training may include: awareness of crime areas, awareness of specific higher risk work activities, personal safety, location and operation of alarm systems, communication procedures for securing assistance from security services, protective services, and medical services and emergency escape routes.

SECURITY ASSESSMENT

Each City department should periodically review all work environments to assess the potential for violence or threat of violence, to identify existing security measures and to recommend additional reasonable measures that could be implemented to increase workplace security. The necessity for workplace security measures varies significantly, depending on the type of work environment. The following are some of the general issues that should be addressed in a workplace security assessment: procedures for securing emergency assistance; access and freedom of movement within the work environment; existing locks, security systems, physical barriers; employees' knowledge of emergency procedures; routine work procedures; escape routes; access to protective and security personnel; cash handling procedures and signage.

In conducting the periodic security assessment, City departments are encouraged to use joint labor management teams to ensure that the security issues of line staff are identified.

COMMUNICATION

Fundamental to the success of the City's efforts to prevent workplace violence is completely open communication between employees, supervisors and managers. Employees are the best source of information on potentially violent situations or individuals in the workplace. Employees should be encouraged to immediately bring to the attention of supervisors and/or managers any issue that has the potential to create violence in the workplace. Management must educate and update employees on workplace violence issues through relevant articles in newsletters, safety bulletins, and safety meetings.

INVESTIGATION OF POTENTIAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Management must take any report of a potentially violent situation or potentially violent individual seriously, and conduct an immediate investigation to assess the potential for violence. If the information is verified, management should take action in accordance with the concepts identified in the Workplace Violence Intervention and Reporting Guidelines.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND REPORTING GUIDELINES

This document provides intervention and reporting procedures to implement the City's Workplace Violence Policy. The procedures apply to situations and behaviors involving the threat of violence, the potential for violence or actual violence in the workplace. The procedures cover steps to take when dealing with employees and former employees who present early warning signals of danger, potential danger or

immediate danger as well as to non-employees who may pose similar threats to City employees.

THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

Two types of Threat Assessment Teams are hereby established:

1. **City's Threat Assessment Team:** The City has created a City-wide Threat Assessment Team consisting of representatives of the Personnel Department, Los Angeles Police Department's Threat Management Unit, the City Attorney's Labor Relations Division, the Personnel Department's Medical Services Psychology Section and the Los Angeles Police Department's Behavioral Science Services. The team or any of its members is available to City departments to assist in handling situations involving potential or actual violence in the workplace.
2. **Department Threat Assessment Team:** Each City department should create a Department Threat Assessment Team for the evaluation and management of all reported threats or acts of workplace violence. The team should be chaired by the department's personnel officer and should include a representative from the department's senior management. Additional members may be added to the team on an incident-by-incident basis, including a member from the affected employee's line supervision and a representative from the employee's employee organization, if the employee is represented.

The Threat Assessment Team will evaluate each reported threat or act of violence and, where appropriate, provide recommendations for intervention and management of the individual and work site. The chair of the team must maintain a record of all reported threats or acts of violence and document the team's findings and recommendations.

RESPONSE TO "DANGER SIGNALS" BY THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

1. **Early Warning Danger Signals:** An individual may display early warning signs of behavior or language which, if not addressed, could result in acting out and/or creating significant emotional distress for others in the workplace. These warning signs include changes in an individual's regular behavior patterns, especially a deterioration of general behavior and/or work performance, withdrawal from others at work, increased irritability or expressed feelings of victimization (for example, blaming others for the employee's work problems). These behaviors should be evaluated. If the behaviors of an employee are verified, the employee should be counseled, and, if appropriate, encouraged to seek treatment through the employee's Employee Assistance Program or his/her health care provider.

While it may be more difficult to observe early warning signs developing over time in an individual who is not a City employee, if similar types of behavior on the part of such individual do occur in the workplace, it is important to notify a supervisor and document any such incident or behavior.

2. **Potential Danger:** An individual may display a pattern of behavior or language which is a warning sign of potential violence and/or which may cause significant emotional distress for others in the workplace. Such indicators include belligerent or defiant behavior; harassing, abusive or threatening language; indirect threats;

paranoid language or actions; fascination with weapons or with acts of violence; or preoccupation with a particular City employee. Any such behavior should be evaluated, verified and documented.

In instances where an employee's behavior is verified and is creating disruption in the workplace, but attempts to defuse the situation fail, the supervisor, in consultation with a personnel officer if feasible, may place an employee off duty on paid leave. However, in instances where the supervisor reasonably suspects that substance abuse is a contributing cause of the behavior of concern, the supervisor should arrange for an immediate substance abuse assessment in accordance with existing department policies and procedures.

Where the potential danger is caused by an individual who is not a City employee, it may be possible to defuse the situation verbally. If efforts to do so fail, all affected employees should attempt to remove themselves from the situation. If necessary and possible, security should be notified and the individual removed from the workplace.

As soon as it is practical after an incident creating potential danger, a meeting of the department's Threat Assessment Team should be held to develop an intervention plan for the individual creating such a danger and for the employees in the workplace. Such plan may include removing an employee from the workplace (if that has not yet been done) proposing discipline, and/or referring the employee for a work fitness evaluation by a City Psychologist. If the incident was caused by an individual who is not an employee, such plan may include taking additional security or precautionary measures.

At any time during the assessment of the individual's behavior and the work environment or later, during the planning sessions of the department's Threat Assessment Team, the department's personnel officer or other team member may find it useful to consult with the City's Threat Assessment Team by calling the City Psychologist at (213) 473-6928 or the Los Angeles Police Department's Threat Management Unit at (213) 847-0200.

3. **Immediate Danger:** Circumstances may arise in which an individual poses a clear and present threat of danger causing harm to him/herself or to others. Examples of posing an immediate danger include brandishing or using a weapon or otherwise causing harm or risk of harm to another or making credible direct threats to cause such harm.

Where an individual poses an immediate danger, the following steps should be taken:

- A. Call 911 when a weapon is involved or when there is an immediate and direct threat to someone's life.
- B. In all other cases, call department security, if available, and/or place a non-emergency call to the local police department for assistance in controlling the situation.
- C. Notify other persons in the area of immediate danger.
- D. Get medical and/or mental health assistance, if necessary.
- E. Contact the Police Department's Threat Management Unit for an assessment of possible criminal activity and/or need for mental health intervention.

- F. If violence occurs, take immediate action to care for the needs of affected employees. See the "Aftermath Response" section of the Post-Critical Incident Guidelines for specific recommendations for action.

In addition to the above, if an employee poses the immediate danger, the following steps should be taken by supervisory or management personnel of the department:

- G. Place the employee who poses an immediate danger off duty with pay. The department's personnel officer should then determine, by consulting with the appropriate mental health professional, whether a work fitness evaluation will be required prior to the employee's return to duty.
- H. Where appropriate, impose discipline in accordance with Civil Service or other applicable disciplinary guidelines.
- I. In instances in which the employee has been cleared to return to duty, hold a meeting of the department's Threat Assessment Team and appropriate members of the City's Threat Assessment Team to develop an immediate and long-range plan for the employee and the work site.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POST CRITICAL INCIDENT GUIDELINES

Workplace violence is one of a range of critical incidents outside the normal scope of human experiences that has the potential to cause psychological trauma. Critical incidents include naturally occurring disasters; industrial or traffic accidents resulting in death, serious injury, or the perception of a "close call"; unusual occurrences which bring intense and/or prolonged negative public scrutiny; and physical violence or credible threats of violence that result in or could result in death or serious injury to employees or their customers.

The impact of a critical incident may be limited or widespread within a department depending upon whether it affects a few or many people within the department. Regardless of the extent to which it impacts the department, it is important to initiate a series of steps to assist the affected employees with their emotional recovery. These guidelines are designed to establish a timely and appropriate City response to the aftermath of traumatic events involving City employees so that the impact upon employees is mitigated and their coping and recovery may be accelerated.

Each department shall designate an individual, usually the department's personnel officer, who shall serve as the Post Critical Incident Coordinator in conjunction with the City's Lead Occupational Psychologist in cases involving non-LAPD employees, and the LAPD's Chief Police Psychologist of Behavioral Sciences Services in cases involving LAPD employees. The department's Post Critical Incident Coordinator will be responsible for the preparation and implementation of a Post Critical Incident Plan.

Plan preparation shall include but not be limited to:

1. Identifying and establishing a list of available City mental health practitioners, including available EAP resources, who have expertise in trauma, crisis intervention, and critical incident stress debriefing and who can be deployed in the aftermath of a critical incident.* These resources shall be on-call and immediately available.

2. Establishing a list of management personnel who can make appropriate decisions regarding an employees' work status.
3. Establishing a system for communicating with highly affected employees and victims' families for ongoing psychological and human resource needs.
4. Establishing within each organizational unit/facility a location for the incident command center to serve as the point of telephonic/physical contact for incidents.

***Some departments, such as Fire and Water and Power, may have their own mental health/EAP resources with appropriate critical incident services. In such instances, the department should utilize its own mental health resources.**

5. Identifying rooms within each organizational unit/facility for individual counseling, group counseling, and a meeting place for the mental health team.
6. Creating an Injury and Death Notification Team by identifying and training appropriate departmental representatives to provide death and injury notifications.*
7. Establishing media relations procedures, including identifying the department's media spokesperson.

AFTERMATH RESPONSE

The department's Post Critical Incident Coordinator will be responsible for implementing the following aftermath response guidelines to critical incidents. For all incidents, whether limited or widespread, the following steps should be considered:

IMMEDIATE

1. In coordination with the department's media spokesperson, gather information as to what happened, who was involved, who may be affected (most to least) and begin a process of determining what information may be shared immediately with involved and the affected employee(s) to reduce anxiety and misinformation.
2. Ensure that all media contact is through the department's media spokesperson.
3. Consult with the City's Lead Occupational Psychologist or the LAPD Chief Police Psychologist of Behavioral Sciences, or other mental health/EAP resources as appropriate, regarding necessary notifications and the need for onsite mental health intervention. Consideration should be given to critical incident defusing and/or debriefing as indicated for the affected employee(s).
4. Address the issue of temporary reassignment, time off, or other appropriate accommodations with the more highly affected work group members as recommended by mental health resources and as requested by the employee(s).

***Staff of the LAPD's Behavioral Science Services Section will be available to provide training for the members of the Injury and Death Notification Teams. Interested departments should contact the Chief Police Psychology of Behavioral Science Services who will be coordinating delivery of this training at a specific date and time in a centralized training session.**

5. Ensure that prior to leaving work each potentially affected employee will have had access to on-scene mental health support and/or, for those employees desirous of, or in obvious need of counseling, that an appointment has been scheduled with a mental health counselor. Use, as needed, the appropriate EAP to facilitate scheduling such an appointment.
6. Provide each affected or potentially affected employee with the phone numbers to the appropriate EAP and to the counseling service from the employee's medical provider.
7. If necessary, convene the Injury and Death Notification Team. For death notification, include on the team, if possible, an individual who knew the decedent and/or the family. Ensure that the injury and death notifications are conducted in a sensitive and compassionate manner.
8. Ensure that as much relevant information as possible will be shared with personnel within a supportive context by holding a meeting of all affected employees as soon as practical. Care should be taken that information shared at this meeting does not jeopardize any ongoing investigation and does not violate the privacy needs of victims and their families.

SHORT-TERM

1. Contact each affected employee two days, one week, and then two weeks after the incident, whether or not the employee is on or off duty, to inquire regarding his/her current status and need for mental health intervention, and to assess the need for work accommodation or work site adjustment.
2. Through mental health counselors, provide critical incident debriefing to affected and potentially affected employees within two days of the incident.
3. Offer an opportunity for follow-up critical incident debriefings for affected employees within one to two weeks of the incident.
4. Assign a liaison to provide emotional support to victims' families and to assist in City related matters.

LONGER-TERM

1. Ensure that the progress of the most affected personnel is monitored.
2. Orient management and supervision to be sensitive to employees' grief reactions around anniversaries of the event, holidays, and criminal justice/civil proceedings.
3. Consider the need for follow-up debriefing.
4. Consult with the appropriate City Psychologist regarding employees who continue to report difficulties in coping two weeks post incident.
5. Establish a liaison to assist victims and their families in obtaining the City resources and benefits to which they are entitled.
6. If a fatality occurs, establish a memorial service committee that includes at least one member from the deceased employee's work group.
7. Conduct a post event assessment of the department's response to the incident. Discuss any modifications to the procedures with appropriate City staff and incorporate beneficial changes into the Post Critical Incident Plan.