

Workplace Preparedness

Being Prepared Is Key

Are you ready to deal with the unexpected at work? As a manager or supervisor, you have plenty to stay ahead of on a typical day. But have you given thought to the types of crises that could impact your workplace unexpectedly? This could include natural disasters occurring in your area. It could also include a crisis such as workplace violence.

The best way to deal with such challenging situations is: **be ready for them in advance.** It's quite natural to think, "That couldn't happen here." But in fact, natural and human crises can impact any workplace in any geographic region. Being aware of potentially damaging workplace situations can help you prepare should the unexpected occur. And having a plan for the "worst case scenario" can help reduce the impact on your organization.

In this issue of *Your Source*, you will learn how to:

- Prepare your workplace for natural disasters, and help your staff cope should a disaster occur.
- Recognize the signs of potential workplace violence and learn how to respond to the situation.
- Maintain good communication with your staff on a routine basis and in times of crisis.

As a manager, your role is to protect the interests of both your staff and the organization as a whole. This issue of *Your Source* gives you helpful ideas on how to prepare for difficult workplace challenges.

Go Online Today! Log on to access *Workplace Preparedness* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section.



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Tips for Dealing with Disasters

We hear about them all the time: natural disasters such as tornadoes, floods, hurricanes and wildfires. They can devastate your region and damage your business operations. And they can have an overwhelming effect on your staff.

To prepare for a disaster:

- Identify disaster threats that could possibly affect your region and your specific business unit.
- Know your organization's disaster plan for your location.
- Understand the disaster plan that will specify how your business unit would resume work if your office is unusable. Focus on resuming communication with staff and customers, computer and equipment operations, and access to your vital business records.

If disaster strikes:

- Meet immediately and often with staff after the disaster; give them a chance to talk.
- Let them know that it's perfectly normal to experience a wide range of emotions.
- Be ready to share information when staff members have questions about pay or benefits.
- Direct staff toward counseling services and community resources for help.
- Understand that the disaster can impact staff in different ways.
- Help staff organize a donation drive or fundraiser.

Recognizing the Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence can impact your employees, your organization, and your organization's productivity. It is important for every manager to be aware of the warning signs of all types of potential violence.

Prevention is a Key First Step

Your organization may have a “zero tolerance” policy in place for all types of violence in the workplace—even non-physical acts such as shouting. Your management training should include how to listen carefully and address problems promptly. It is also important to learn to use the tools of performance counseling and conflict resolution. These can help you deal with difficult situations earlier rather than later. The first step is to obtain and learn your organization's policy.

The Signs of Potential Danger

As a manager you are not expected to be able to diagnose human behavior. But you can help avoid dangerous situations by knowing the warning signs and situations that could lead to workplace violence. Some warning signs to watch for include:

- Strongly oppose workplace change
- Display verbally insulting, threatening or other aggressive behaviors
- Have continuing conflicts with supervisors or co-workers
- Express an undue fascination with weapons
- Have repeatedly violated workplace policies
- Show signs of increased mood swings, behavior, appearance or speech
- Display signs of depression, paranoia or reckless substance abuse
- Use expressions such as, “I can't take it anymore” or “I think I'm going to explode”

When You Need Help

In a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or other emergency services available in your area and contact your human resources department. You can contact your program for confidential counseling help around workplace violence. More information and resources are available online.

If a staff member is troubled, let them know that the FOH EAP can help and is strictly confidential.

Which is the better approach to take if a staff member is troubled and potentially violent?

- A. Confront the staff member and suggest that he or she could face severe consequences.
- B. Listen to and acknowledge the staff member's feelings, and recommend a counseling resource.

Answer B is the better approach. Listen carefully and let the staff member know that you are interested in what he or she has to say rather than being confrontational or rejecting the staff member's views outright. Let the person know that he or she has choices and that confidential help is available.

Now That's an Idea!

Active Listening in the Workplace

See the staff member's side—Staff members need to feel that they are being heard by busy supervisors.

Listen actively—When meeting with a member on your team, remind yourself that you are there to get his or her point of view, not just to state your opinion.

Remove distractions—Don't allow office distractions to prevent you from focusing on what the person has to say.

Recognize trends—Open, regular communication between you and your team members can help you spot potential problems.

Value their input—Encourage your staff to offer their ideas on workplace issues. They may have practical insights you may otherwise miss.