



WORKING IN THE “AGE OF RAGE”

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION FOR BREWERIES

PART II: RESPONDING TO THE THREAT

The two best steps for reducing the odds of becoming a victim of violence are:

- (1) Learn how to recognize, avoid or defuse potentially-violent situations; and
- (2) Alert supervisors and other responders to any concerns about safety of self or others.

With awareness and practice, every employee can learn to recognize and defuse potentially-violent situations. There are steps owners/managers can take to prevent violence when red flags are reported to them. Personal safety is the primary focus. A response, if any, must be based on all of the surrounding circumstances and risks:

WHEN ENCOUNTERING A DISRUPTIVE PERSON:

- Observe. Look for outward signs of distress, unusual comments, or provocative behaviors; if apprehensive about safety, call or report to a manager.
- Fight or Flight? For the vast majority of us, we turn and walk away from the insensitive or offensive comments of others unless we cannot leave the area or otherwise avoid the person. If you are able to avoid the person, you should still note unacceptable comments and behaviors and complain immediately through appropriate channels in accordance with your employer’s guidelines.
- If you respond, or you must respond under the circumstances, speak slowly, softly and calmly. The effort is to defuse, not escalate, aggression.
- Don’t reinforce the disruptive behavior in any way. Don’t say, “Yes, you’re right that your co-worker [or supervisor] is at fault” or “I’d probably kick some ass too.”
- Do not take the behavior personally. “Let it go” – You are the target, not necessarily the source, of the problem.
- Consider a general apology, if fitting for the circumstances. Even if you’ve done nothing wrong, an apology may encourage cooperation, for example, “I’m sorry that happened to you. What can we do now to solve the problem?”
- Listen, ask the person to describe the problem, and then clearly summarize what you hear the other person saying to you. Persons in crisis often desire attention; repeating back a summary of the person’s concerns reflects your attention. Focus on areas of agreement to help resolve the problem. Listen with interest! All people need to feel that helping them is your top priority.
- Try to avoid being defensive; it’s natural, but listen without placing responsibility back on the complaining party.
- Acknowledge or accept their emotions by your support. Support reduces hostility or fear. If the other person wants a confrontation, don’t give it. Say “I can understand how you would be upset, please tell me how I can help you.”
- Ask questions to deflect aggressiveness. There is power in questions, and you remain in control. “Tell me why you are upset? “What would you like us to do?”
- Safety experts encourage persons to defuse volatile behavior in private. If you encourage a person to meet in a quiet, safe place to talk, or you are in a private room already, do not isolate yourself with the individual. Leave the door open or open a closed door, and sit near the door. Never let an upset or aggressive person sit or stand between you and an exit door.

- Maintain a safe distance from an angry or disruptive person. Never turn your back on an agitated person and, if seated, stay seated, if possible.
- Never touch an agitated person or try to remove them from the area.

IF THE SITUATION IS ESCALATING:

- Establish boundaries. Calmly and firmly set limits. Offensive name-calling or raising one's voice in anger is a form of violence. Ignoring some name-calling initially and sticking to the subject of a complaint may be advised, don't lash back. However, it is appropriate to say "Please lower your voice," "That's not the appropriate way to speak to me," "Please stop shouting (or using profanity) or I'll have to ask you to leave." Keep in mind, in the initial phases of conflict, you may not want to rush to final outcomes, such as "I'm firing you," especially if you fear an angry or violent response. People feel they have more power if they are in control of their own outcomes.
- However, you are not a verbal punching bag. Ask the individual to stop and, if they do not comply, warn of the consequences. "Please stop or I cannot assist you" or "I need to get my supervisor to address your concern."
- If the disruption continues despite the warning, state the discussion is over, and direct the person to leave. "Please leave now. If you don't leave, I'm getting Security [calling the Police]."
- If the situation escalates beyond the point you can reasonably handle, disengage. Get out. Find a way to excuse yourself, leave the room and call for help. "You've raised some tough questions. Let me consult with my supervisor to see what we can do." Think, in the future, how will you let people around you know you need help?
- Remember, it is always the right thing to **report any concern regarding your or another's safety to an owner, manager, Human Resources representative, private security, police or 911**, depending on the level of harm perceived, and regardless of the format of the threat (e.g., in person, via phone/text/social media)
- **If you are in danger, leave the area immediately. DO YOU KNOW THE NEAREST EVACUATION ROUTE? If you are unable to leave, take cover immediately.**

THE ACTIVE SHOOTER

Gun violence is becoming increasingly prevalent in the United States, with more than 44,000 related deaths in 2022. Preparing your team with the knowledge of how to respond in the event they encounter an active shooter can save lives. Companies such as ALICE Training® Solutions offer quick but informative virtual training options for survival during a violent critical incident. The FBI also offers active shooter preparedness training to the public. You can contact the Active Shooter Coordinator in your local FBI field office for more information.

RUN- WHEN IT'S SAFE TO RUN.

Don't hesitate. Remember windows and emergency exits. If possible, leave the building and move to a secure location or hiding place. Take others with you, but do not stay behind if others will not go. Leave your belongings behind, except your cell phone if possible, and call 911 when safe to do so. Don't assume others have reported the incident. If you encounter police personnel, keep your hands raised and visible.

HIDE- WHERE IT'S SAFE TO HIDE.

If you cannot evacuate safely, hide in an area outside the armed person's view, preferably with thicker walls and fewer windows, if possible. Close blinds/shades, lock doors and barricade with furniture. Turn off lights. Silence cell phones. If outside, find a place that can provide protection from gunfire, such as a building, brick wall, or large trees.

FIGHT- IF YOU HAVE NO OTHER OPTIONS.

If you cannot evacuate or hide safely and only when your life is in imminent danger, fight for your life. Act with extreme physical aggression toward the threat in order to incapacitate or disrupt the actions of a shooter. Use available objects as improvised weapons. Throw items at the shooter. Use teamwork and surprise. A coordinated ambush can incapacitate an attacker.

The key to keeping your team safe is to arm them with knowledge and ensure they have the tools to respond quickly and safely if the need arises. Training your employees on how to diffuse a situation before it escalates and respond in the event of a violent critical incident is the best way to ensure everyone makes it home at the end of the day.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION GUIDANCE ON WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION,
SEE ALSO:**

- Working in the “Age of Rage”: Workplace Violence Prevention for Breweries - Part I: Recognizing the Signs
- Working in the “Age of Rage”: Workplace Violence Prevention for Breweries - Part III: Prevention & Recovery