

Protecting Your Company and Productivity Against Workplace Threats

... an employee relations perspective

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Objectives

From an employee relations perspective:

- Understand why preparedness matters (convincing your leaders to prepare)
- Understand common physical threats and how you might choose to prepare
- Less common threats -- what to consider
- Explore the elements of a solid plan of preparedness

Why does preparedness matter?

- Employees may even laugh about some of the planning and strategizing
- So, why all the planning and thinking about threats?



"Has anyone considered that we'll be wearing heels during the evacuation drill?"

Why does preparedness matter?

- You might find that identifying relevant threats is pretty easy.
- Obtaining acknowledgement from management can be more difficult.

That's the third bomb scare this week! Click

That could never happen here

I have not missed work in 10 years.

He's going to kill me.

The Pros of Preparedness

- **Workers increasingly look to employers for answers in a crisis.**
 - **The employer is often in the best position to evaluate the facility, label the doors, own the PA system, know which doors are locked/bolted, know which employees have mobility issues.**
 - **Well-prepared employee groups will evacuate in an orderly fashion, thereby increasing survivability.**

Case in point*

- Chief of Security for Morgan Stanley in the World Trade Center
- Anticipated the attacks and implemented evacuation procedures between 1993 and 2001
- 2700 employees on 20 floors were evacuated before the 2nd plane hit WTC – only 6 employees died (4, incl. Rescola, were security)
- Ignored building official's orders to stay put and, as rehearsed, implemented Morgan Stanley's plan when the first plane hit



Rick Rescola
1939-2001

*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rick_Rescola

The Pros of Preparedness

- In some cases, there may be a risk of duty of care attributed to the employer.
 - Where a worker is known by the employer to have a threat against him, but the general employee population is not protected or told.
 - “Workplace violence is now recognized as a specific category of violent crime that calls for distinct responses from employers, law enforcement, and the community.”
<http://www.fbi.gov/publications/violence.pdf>, *page 12*
 - “Employers have a legal and ethical obligation to promote a work environment free from threats and violence and, in addition, can face economic loss as the result of violence in the form of lost work time, damaged employee morale and productivity, increased workers’ compensation payments, medical expenses, and possible lawsuits and liability costs.”
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 - In some cases, the employer may acquire a duty of care voluntarily.

Physical Threats

- **Workplace Violence -- 4 categories:**
 - **TYPE 1: Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace, but enter to commit robbery or another crime. Most common of all types.**
 - TYPE 2: Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or any others for whom an organization provides services.
 - TYPE 3: Violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers by a present or former employee.
 - TYPE 4: Violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn’t work there, but has a personal relationship with an employee—an abusive spouse or domestic partner.

Workplace Violence Policies

- Policies published to employees:
 - Policy addressing weapons on premises (guns, knives, etc.)
 - Tenn. Law supports this type of policy and requests that it be posted at the entrance (Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1359)
 - Policy to require employees to inform employers of threats to themselves or others.
 - Employee conduct policies that assist you in ridding the workplace of dangerous employees and forbidding intimidation, coercion, inappropriate physical conduct etc.
 - Policies that make it clear employees need not deal with abusive customers, vendors or other third parties

Workplace Violence Tools

- **Background checks can assist with identifying troubled persons.**
 - **Scenario: Would you deny a job to a person who had a misdemeanor offense for domestic violence? What if the wife is still married to him?**
 - **What about a bar fight in college 10 years ago?**
 - **Child abuse?**

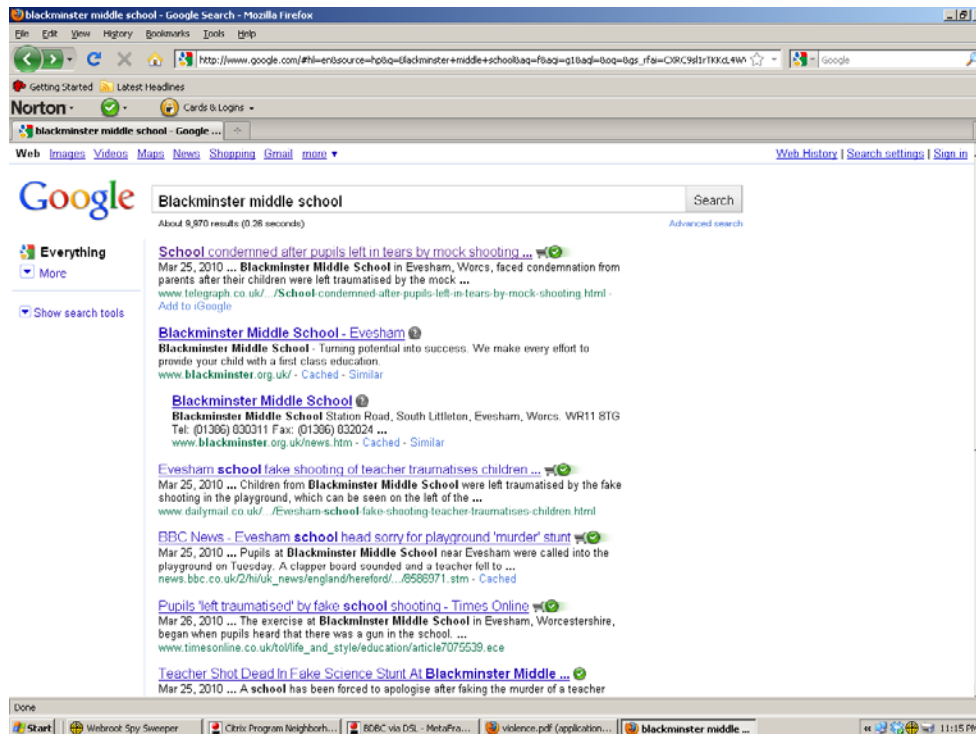
Workplace Violence Tools

- **Termination procedures can assist with prevention of threats by ex-employees**
- **Security generally, including availability of security for walks to and from cars and locked access doors**
- **Plans for “gunman” scenarios –**
 - **tools for cutting glass windows for escape**
 - **Installing windows in doors, for surveillance of threats**

Profiling the violent co-worker

- **The FBI encourages looking at risk factors in their totality**
 - **Increased belligerence**
 - **Fascination with weapons**
 - **Mishandled discipline or termination**
 - **Recent divorce or financial troubles**
 - **Obsession with real or imagined grievance**
 - **Hypersensitivity to criticism**
 - **Threat of suicide (“Suicide by Cop”)**

A word about practicing the plan



Pandemic Preparedness

- Unlike some threats, maybe more time to prepare
- A lot of consultants and folks making money off this fear
- Infectious disease experts agree that there will be time to refine the approach



Types of Threats

- **Ill workers**
- **Ill workers that come to work against instructions**
- **Workers who don't believe in vaccines**
- **Absent workers caring for school aged children or for sick family members**
- **Need for social distancing; requirement to minimize attendance at the office**

Pandemic Related Policies

- **Examine your sick policy before flu season**
- **Offer flu shots, if you think it'll help your employees get vaccinated**
- **Create work-from-home policies, if the job will permit it**
- **Keep an eye on the news and CDC websites -- create a protocol for taking action**

Pandemic Planning

- Create a team to address the issue
 - Building/facility persons, security, HR, Legal, select manager stakeholders
 - Consider the role of a government partner or advisor
 - Will there be employees asked to volunteer for duties?



Pandemic Planning

- **Plan for preserving health and safety in the workplace**
 - **This will cover issues such as:**
 - **Do you buy a supply of masks and gloves?**
 - **Do you stockpile energy supplies?**
 - **How will you screen employees entering the workplace? And what if they refuse?**
 - **Do we maintain information on employees such as allergies to meds?**
 - **Do we modify travel?**

Pandemic Planning

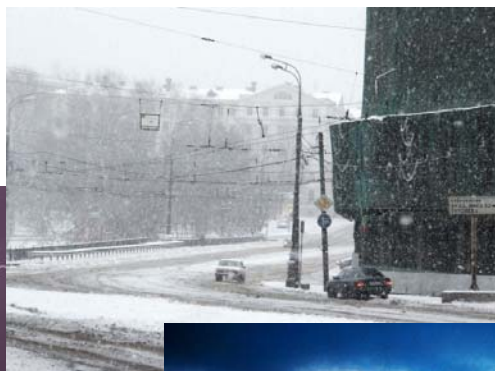
- **Plan for preserving productivity**
 - **This will cover such issues as:**
 - **When should employees work from home?**
 - **Is there a plan for asking employees to stay home?**
 - **Will you have plans for attempting to obtain treatment for employees – or food and water, if the pandemic leads to shortages.**
 - **Can employees avoid traveling to customers, relying instead on technology to visit?**

Pandemics

- Center for Biosecurity conducted a conference on March 5, 2010 on the response to H1N1
- "The gamut of recent disease outbreaks—Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, Ebola viral hemorrhagic fever, West Nile viral encephalitis, intentional anthrax, and H5N1 viral infections in humans—has heightened concerns about global health security and global economic stability."*

*http://www.upmc-biosecurity.org/website/special_topics/global_disease_surveillance/

Bad Weather



Bad Weather Policy

- **Have a clear plan for deciding when employees should travel in for work. It may be best to leave it up to the employees' discretion.**
- **Can you require an employee take a vacation day, if they don't travel in and you have the facility open? Yes. But, you don't have to do that either.**

Bad Weather Policy

- **Have clear communication streams, and ask that employees rely on them.**
- **Have a plan for closing midday and for permitting employees to go get their children if the schools close.**
- **Consider subscribing to weather alert services. Many are free.**
- **Who will make the call to instruct employees to take cover?**

Other Threats

- **Gas and energy shortages**
- **Bomb threats**
- **Protests against the company**
- **Threatening phone calls (may involve women or minorities as targets)**
- **Threats against leaders**

And, then there's France

Other Threats



A rash of boss-nappings led President Sarkozy to outlaw the practice in April of 2009.

Wikipedia even has a page devoted to defining the practice, which became common during the recession of the 2000s and is more akin to a lock-in.

Best Plan Practices

- **Start at the Top – get buy-in to move ahead assessing the risks/threats relevant to the business.**
- **Convene a committee of stakeholders.**
- **Define the objectives and focus the team on those objectives.**
- **Utilize the vast array of public resources available on these topics.**



Best Plan Practices

- Act proportionately to the threat.
- Draft appropriate policies.
- Reduce the response plan to writing.
- Review annually.
- Run drills – particularly where evacuation is involved.
- Be thoughtful when running unannounced drills or drills where it's possible not everyone will realize it's a drill.

Best Plan Practices

- Invest in tools you need to execute the plan – such as glass breaking tools or hardhats.
- Enforce employment policies that bear on safety – ex. closed-toed shoes.
- Consider the aftermath of a disaster – do you have a good provider of support services?



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