

Update your plan for preventing violence

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration is aggressively going after employers that don't take seriously their responsibility to provide a safe workplace—especially those that don't have a specific violence prevention program in place.

For example, OSHA has fined a Colorado nursing home for not doing enough to prevent patient violence against employees. It alleges that the Pioneer Health Care Center failed to protect employees from violence after the agency received two complaints in August 2017. Pioneer Health Care is a long-term residential facility that also provides mental health services.

A subsequent OSHA investigation revealed five documented cases of workplace violence that year that resulted in injuries, as well as several incidents that were not uncovered until officials inspected the nursing home. The OSHA citation criticized it "for failing to implement adequate measures to protect employees from workplace violence hazards."

OSHA is likely to impose monetary penalties specifically because the facility lacked a violence prevention plan.

Final note: Not sure what specific risks are inherent in your industry or specific workplace location? OSHA has developed resources aimed at specific industries. Examples:

- Health care and social service settings: www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3148.pdf
- Hospitals: www.osha.gov/dsg/hospitals/workplace_violence.html
- Late-night retail establishments: www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3153.pdf
- Taxi and other commercial drivers: www.osha.gov/Publications/taxi-driver-violence-factsheet.pdf.

In addition, employers should have plans in place for other types of workplace violence, including education and planning for employee mass shootings, whether involving employees or former employees or outside attacks.

OSHA has specific guidance on responding to such violence:

www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/factsheet-workplace-violence.pdf.

Advice: Check trade associations representing your industry to see if they have specific violence-prevention guidance you can apply.