



**VIRGINIA BEACH MASS SHOOTING**

Last Friday’s shooting in Virginia Beach was the deadliest mass shooting this year. We join the rest of the nation and pray for the families, injured victims and the Virginia Beach community who were so horribly affected by this act of senseless violence. As a risk and insurance management company, we are acutely aware of the threat and risks of workplace violence.

While there is no widely accepted definition of “mass shooting”, there have been over 150 incidents of firearms-related violence resulting in multiple victims in 2019 in the U.S. (gunviolencearchive.org). Both the Virginia Beach tragedy and the year’s second deadliest shooting (Aurora, IL) occurred at the perpetrator’s place of work.

**How prevalent is workplace violence?**

According to the US Dept of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2017, there were 458 workplace homicides, making this the fourth leading cause of workplace fatalities overall – more so than electrocution, exposures to hazardous chemicals and fires. Most occur in retail, followed by government and the leisure and hospitality industries. While most fatalities are caused by robbers, co-workers or work associates are the third most common assailant. Men are more likely to be killed by a robber; women by a relative or domestic partner. California, Texas and Florida are the three leading states for workplace homicides. Most fatalities are caused by gunshots.

The U.S. Department of Labor list different risk factors that increase the likelihood of workplace violence. The leading factors are: contact with the public – especially with an unstable or volatile population, exchange of money, deliveries of goods, services or passengers, working from a mobile workplace and working alone or in small numbers.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) does not have a specific standard for workplace violence. An employer’s duty to address this exposure is governed by the General Duty Clause § 5 (a)

According to the HR Daily Advisor, sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are four types of workplace violence:

Type	Description	Industries at Risk	Impact
<b>Criminal Intent</b>	The perpetrator has no legitimate relationship to the business. This includes robbers, shoplifters and persons involved in terrorism.	Retail, transportation, public sector	Most workplace homicides (85-percent) fall into this category.
<b>Customer or Client</b>	The perpetrator has a legitimate reason to be on the premises, but becomes violent when being served or treated by the business.	Retail, health care, social service agencies, education, public sector, transportation	Small percentage of workplace homicides
<b>Worker-on-Worker</b>	A current or former employee is the perpetrator.	All industries	This is the third leading category of assailants.
<b>Personal Relationship</b>	Perpetrator has a personal relationship with the intended victim.	All industries	Small percentage of workplace homicides, but the leading cause of workplace homicides for female employees.



### **Mitigation**

The actions of the gunman in the Virginia Beach shooting is different and problematic. While the details are still developing and much is still not known, it appears that the perpetrator did not exhibit any of the typical warning signs of workplace violence. He entered the premises legally with an employee pass and he did not have a history of violent behavior. His use of a noise suppressor affected the ability of law enforcement to locate and contain the perpetrator and it reduced staff response time.

Here are several practical steps employers can take to prevent workplace violence.

#### **Do a Risk Assessment**

In other words, identify your business' vulnerabilities.

#### **Perimeter Control**

Limit and control access to your premises from the street or roadway, if possible.

#### **Secure the Building Envelope**

Direct visitors to a central sign-in point. Distribute employee passes/access cards to staff so you know who is on the premises. Consider the use of security guards and metal detectors, if warranted.

#### **Develop, Distribute and Enforce Workplace Policies**

Screen staff and establish weapons-in-the-workplace, anti-harassment, drug and alcohol and safety procedures and policies. Consider an employee assistance program.

#### **Emergency Management Plans**

Check compliance with OSHA standards that require emergency action plans (EAPs). Plans must include active shooter situations. Depending on the circumstances involved, the correct response to an active shooter could include evacuation, shelter-in-place and fighting back.

#### **Look for Partners**

Check with your local police, fire, EMS or Homeland Security Office to see what assistance they can provide. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has active shooter resources and training at [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)