

Acts of Workplace Violence

Violence in the workplace is a common place and daily lived experience, which has the potential of disrupting normal proceedings. It can have a devastating impact, as workers can be left traumatized, intimidated and laden with fear.

Workplace violence is best described as the act or threat of violence against workers, ranging from verbal abuse, written threats, physical assault, homicide and any expression of the intent to inflict harm. This definition shows that workplace violence has no defined boundaries. It therefore raises questions as to what are the contributing factors to any element of violence which raises its ugly head.

In most cases, the public is aware of criminal acts of violence which are perpetrated against workers in the workplace; primarily those of robbery and assault. These are heinous acts which are to be deplored. The real problem is that innocent and unsuspecting workers are the victims of such acts. Generally speaking, the employer avoids being blamed for negligence on his part by providing a safe place of work. Those who invade the workplace, do so despite the security measures that are put in place. The proactive employer undertakes to put measures in place to prevent or minimize the risks faced by their employees.

Besides the criminal acts to which the world will never get accustomed, the acts of violence that workers inflict one upon the other, and/or that workers suffer at the hands of management or the employer, are matters of concern. None of this is desired or acceptable. The promotion of a zero tolerance policy in the workplace should be directed at eliminating any contemplated or intended acts. There yet remains the challenge of dealing with those acts of violence which are external to the workplace, but nonetheless impact upon it.

The evidence points to the fact that the source and force of violence in the workplace can be deeply rooted in the realm of the external world. Already it has been established that attacks on the workplace by criminal minded persons is a primary source. It can be contended that in addition to this, domestic violence is also a leading contributor. The fact that domestic violence has no boundaries, leaves room for it to find itself within the workplace; as individuals take their problems there. In many a case, it is reported individuals enter a workplace to pursue a party. In other instances an employee who is under stress from a domestic matter, transport violence into the workplace. The outcome may be an act of aggression, verbal or physical abuse against their colleague(s).

It is most disconcerting when individuals who are disturbed over a matter which relates to their employment, be it termination, disciplinary action, being over looked for promotion or some other matter that aggrieves them, resort to a senseless act of violence upon the workplace. The fact that these for the most part, are calculated to be a treat to life, limb and property, is reprehensible.

The psychological scars which are left upon devastated workers by the trail of death and destruction can possibly make it difficult for some individuals to get over the experience; irrespective of the counselling they receive. As it appears, there may be no immediate solutions to minimizing the impact on acts of violence imposed on the workers at the workplace.