
Workplace Violence Prevention: A Guide for Employees

Seventh Edition

County of Santa Clara

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County of Santa Clara Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

This Section Contains the Policy Approved by the Board of Supervisors on September 26, 1995

Introduction

Santa Clara County is committed to serving a wide range of citizens, some of whom can be under severe stress and have nowhere else to turn. Providing services to these and other persons can place County employees in a position of vulnerability to violence or threatening behavior. The County values its employees and clients and, with this Policy, the Board of Supervisors affirms its commitment to providing workplaces and facilities that are free from violence.

Types of Perpetrators

Strangers

To help protect employees from violent strangers in the community, the County will provide crime prevention information to employees and will address security issues involving worksites and facilities.

Clients

Employees in many departments deal with clients who are distressed and who may make threats or commit acts of violence. The County will provide support and guidance to employees so that threats of violence can be recognized and prudently addressed, and so that acts of violence can be prevented if possible.

Client violence may be difficult to control, and employee exposure to such violence may be a result of working with special client/patient populations. The handling of some client violence situations may properly be the primary function of local law enforcement agencies. As a matter of policy, the County of Santa Clara will not tolerate violent acts or threats of violence by clients or other members of the public towards employees.

Family Members or Acquaintances

If the workplace is affected by a violent act or threat of violence by an employee's family

member or acquaintance, the County will provide support and guidance for the victim and his or her co-workers.

Employees

The County of Santa Clara will not tolerate violent acts or threats of violence (either verbal or implied) by employees. In such cases, the County endorses immediate and definitive use of the disciplinary process up to and including discharge from County employment, consistent with ensuring the safety of co-workers. Criminal prosecution will be pursued as appropriate. The County also advocates a preventive approach whereby merit system rules and regulations are fairly and consistently administered, and where troubled employees receive guidance and, if necessary, professional help.

Roles and Responsibilities

County Executive

The County Executive shall ensure that this Policy is fully implemented and adapted to unique needs at the agency/department level, and that the County organization maintains an effective support structure for responding to acts and threats of workplace violence.

The Executive's Office of Occupational Safety and Environmental Compliance will include the Policy as part of the County's written Injury and Illness Prevention Program.

Employee Services Agency

The Employee Services Agency has overall responsibility for maintaining this Policy and for identifying resources that agencies and departments can use in developing their training plans and violence prevention measures. The Employee Services Agency will also administer workplace violence prevention measures involving Labor Relations (including compulsory medical or "fitness for duty" examinations) and the Employee Assistance Program, and will

coordinate post-incident activities involving employee services and claims management.

Agency and Department Heads

Agency and Department Heads are responsible for ensuring that this Policy is implemented in their respective organizations and that the unique needs of their organizations are addressed through procedures and training. Each agency and/or department must develop a plan for preventing and responding to acts of workplace violence. These plans need not be lengthy, but they shall contain at a minimum a Facility Emergency Plan attachment that includes facility specific procedures (such as alarm buttons and escape routes), notification lists, and a timeline for training designated employees.

Managers and Supervisors

It is the responsibility of managers and supervisors to make safety their highest concern. When made aware of a real or perceived threat of violence, management shall conduct a thorough investigation, provide support for employees, and take specific actions to help prevent acts of violence. Managers and supervisors shall also provide information and training for employees as needed.

Employees

Employees should learn to recognize and respond to behaviors by potential perpetrators that may indicate a risk of violence. Employees shall also place safety as the highest concern, and shall report all acts of violence and threats of violence.

Physical Security

Since the County is a public organization that wishes to remain accessible to its clients to the fullest extent possible, it is not the County's intent to implement a widespread "fortification" of its facilities. The County prefers to train its employees to be the primary means of reducing workplace violence. However, certain facilities, due to the nature of the service provided, may need barriers, cameras, metal detectors, better locks, and the like. Where such structures are necessary, they should be constructed in the least obtrusive way feasible.

Training and Information

Although acts of workplace violence cannot be precisely predicted, knowledge of how to respond to perpetrators can help County employees minimize the risk of violence or injury. The County will provide designated employees with training that will help them take appropriate precautions and respond wisely when confronted with a potentially violent individual. Departments will structure this training to meet the unique needs of each operation.

Since the vast majority of violent acts perpetrated by employees and employee family members are preceded by a number of behaviors that signal an escalating situation, the County will provide employees with written materials that will help them recognize the warning signs of violence, and will recommend professional consultation or initiate intervention measure before a violent act occurs.

Workplace Violence Prevention: A Guide for Employees

Introduction

Although workplace violence against public sector workers is not a crisis or an epidemic (the rate of workplace violence against government employees fell 82% between 1994 and 2011), the annual rate of workplace violence against government workers is still more than twice that of their private sector counterparts.¹ With this in mind, it is important to be prepared. This Guide provides a brief overview of how to deal with threats and acts of violence involving a stranger, a client, a co-worker or a co-worker's family member or acquaintance.

A companion document, *Workplace Violence Prevention: A Guide for Supervisors* and the Board-approved Workplace Violence Prevention Policy are available from your department Safety Coordinator.

Overview

What is Workplace Violence?

Workplace violence includes violent acts or threats of violence in the workplace, including bullying, disruptive, threatening, and violent behavior.

Bullying behavior is repeated, abusive conduct that is threatening, humiliating, or intimidating, or that prevents work from getting done.

Disruptive behavior disturbs, interferes with or prevents normal work functions or activities. Examples include yelling, using profanity, waving arms or fists, verbally abusing others, and refusing reasonable requests for identification.

Threatening behavior includes physical actions short of actual contact/injury (e.g., moving closer aggressively), general oral or written threats to people or property, (statements like "You better watch your back" or "I'll get you") as well as implicit threats ("you'll be sorry" or "this isn't over").

Violent behavior includes any physical assault, with or without weapons. However, incidents do not need to include assaults and/or weapons to be considered workplace violence. Violent behavior includes actions or words that endanger or harm an employee or client, as well as actions that lead a person to reasonably believe that they are in danger (e.g., throwing things, pounding on a desk or door, or destroying property), or specific threats to inflict physical harm (e.g., a threat to shoot a named individual).

Incidents do not need to include assaults or weapons to be considered workplace violence.

Categories of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence can be categorized into four types: violence committed by strangers; violence by customers or clients; violence by coworkers; and violence by personal relations. These workplace violence categories and their specific characteristics are described below.

Type 1. Violence by Strangers

This is violence committed by an assailant who has no legitimate business relationship with the County and usually enters the affected workplace to commit a robbery or other criminal act. Employees who have face-to-face contact and exchange money with the public, work late at night and into the early morning hours, and work alone or in very small numbers are at greatest risk of a Type I event.

¹ [Workplace Violence Against Government Employees 1994-2011](#), U.S. Department of Justice, April 2013

Type 2. Violence by Customers/Clients

This is violence committed by an assailant who either receives services from or is under the custodial supervision of the County. These events involve assaults on public safety and correctional personnel, public transit operators, health care and social service providers, teachers, and other public or private service sector employees who provide professional, public safety, administrative or business services to the public. Assailants can be current or former customers, clients, patients, or criminal suspects, inmates and prisoners.

Type 3. Violence by Coworkers

This involves violence by an assailant who has some employment-related involvement with the County; for example, a current or former employee, supervisor or manager. Any workplace can be at risk of violence by a co-worker. In engaging in bullying, issuing a threat, or committing an assault, the individual's actions are motivated by perceived difficulties in his or her relationship with the victim or with the affected workplace, and the individual may seek revenge for perceived unfair treatment.

Type 4. Violence by Personal Relations

This includes incidents of domestic violence at the workplace by an assailant who confronts an individual with whom he or she has or had a personal relationship outside of work. Personal relations include a current or former spouse, family member, friend or acquaintance. The assailant's actions can be motivated by perceived difficulties in the relationship or by psycho-social factors that are specific to the assailant.

Workplace Violence Prevention

There are a number of strategies to reduce the risk of workplace violence, including workplace design, administrative and procedural practices, and training and adoption of employee best practices for behavior.

Workplace Design

Physical controls remove the hazard from the workplace or create a barrier between the worker and the hazard. Since the County's policy is to keep its facilities as accessible as possible to its clients, the County prefers not to rely on physical security measures as the primary means of preventing workplace violence. However, there are certain measures that can be taken, and your supervisor is responsible for working with the Facility Manager to ensure the physical security of your building. These measures can include:

- Installing a central reception area for each facility, with some kind of physical barrier to help control visitor access.
- Configuring private offices, exam rooms, and interview rooms to ensure that the employee is stationed closest to the door for an unimpeded exit if needed.
- Providing employee identification badges.
- Providing an escape route for all personnel.
- Making sure that all non-public entrances are kept closed and locked. Check with the County Fire Marshal before locking a door that is not equipped with a "panic bar" on the inside.
- Other facility-related items (exterior lighting, security cameras, adequately pruned landscaping, buzzers or silent alarms, and signs).

It may be necessary at some facilities to go beyond the minor physical measures listed above. Decisions regarding the installation of such structures as metal detectors, special lock and bulletproof glass will be made at the department head level due to the considerable planning and expense involved. Be aware that such structures, although effective, are not a fail-safe protection against workplace violence. To be truly effective, any physical security improvements should also be accompanied by continued awareness and caution on the part of all employees. Ask your supervisor if you have concerns in any of these areas.

Procedural Practices

Each facility should add a Workplace Violence Prevention section to its Facility Emergency Response Plan. The development of this section should involve the Emergency Response Team Leader(s), Facility Manager, Safety Coordinator, Management, Union Personnel, and facility Safety Committee.

Each section should include the following elements:

- Specific roles and responsibilities.
- Training.
- Protective measures for employees who perform certain tasks.
- Evacuation routes and safe assembly areas.
- Means of communication.
- Liaison with other agencies and organizations.
- Notification of relatives and next of kin in the event of injury or death.
- Counseling resources.
- Media relations.
- Reception desk procedures.

Ask your supervisor about the Emergency Response Plan for your facility.

Prevention through Behavior – Best Practices

In addition to the workplace design and administrative procedures identified above, there are a number of practices that you can adopt that can reduce your risk of workplace violence. The preventive measures differ for each of the four types of workplace violence events.

Preventing Violence by Strangers

With some types of workplace violence such as armed robbery and assault, the perpetrator is a stranger. This can be someone who comes to your building (but not as a client) or it could be someone you encounter while out on County business. To help protect you from this type of crime, consider the following practices:

- Try to have a co-worker with you, especially at night — use the “buddy system.”
- If you have to work late in a County building, move your car to a well-lighted area near the exit before it gets dark.
- Walk in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk confidently and at a steady pace. If you think you are being followed, go to a public area or building.
- Face traffic when you walk and avoid bushes, doorways, and other places where someone could hide.
- If possible, do not carry a purse; but if you do, carry it over your shoulder and wear your coat over it to conceal it, or hold it in front of you without the strap on your shoulder or neck, folding your arms over it like a football player.
- Never leave your car with the engine running, and don't leave the keys in the ignition.
- If people ask you for directions, politely, but firmly tell them you do not know — and stay well away from them.
- Keep your car doors locked when parked and when driving. Close all windows tightly.
- To help avoid being abducted, try not to park next to vans, especially ones with no windows.
- As you approach your car, survey the area as you are walking. Have your keys out and ready to use. (You can also use them to defend yourself.) Before you unlock the door, check under the car and in the back seat.
- If your car breaks down, open the hood and tie a white flag to the antenna or display a "Call Police" sign. Stay in the locked car and if people approach, open your window just a crack and ask them to call for help. Do not open your car door.

- Discuss any concerns about work practices (such as cash handling), building security, etc., with your supervisor. Departmental safety committees may be able to help with issues such as building improvements to improve physical security.

Preventing Violence from Customers/Clients

Many clients who seek services from the County are under a great deal of stress, and may be frustrated or angry before they even walk in your door or meet with you in the field. They may be experiencing financial difficulties, they may feel a loss of status or prestige, or they may be re-entering society after incarceration or have a criminal background. The bottom line is that many clients entering our sites are already in crisis.

When interacting with clients, first make sure to set up a safe environment:

- Check for and remove loose items that can be used as weapons or projectiles.
- Know your exits or stay near the door for easy exit or escape.
- Have a physical barrier, such as a table, between you and client to minimize the potential for attack.
- For clients of concern, have more than one person present in the room with you.

Keep in mind that conflict often results from communication breakdowns, cultural/belief differences, system pressures, attitude/stress, or lack of trust. It is unlikely that you will be able to address the major stresses in the client's life, and you may not be able to do much about the issue that may be causing frustration. However, a respectful greeting, a smile, and a listening ear can help calm an inflamed temper and diffuse potential conflict.

- Treat everyone in a professional manner.
- Make eye contact and give your full attention.
- Use neutral verbal and non-verbal communication cues.
- Explain your services, and provide help where possible.
- If you cannot provide assistance, direct customers to another reference or resource, or politely explain that you cannot help them.
- Don't make promises unless you can keep them.
- Anticipate complaints or angry behavior and prepare for them.

It is always best to use the lowest level of response when dealing with an angry client. For example, avoid raising your voice if they raise theirs. Stay calm, and try to keep the situation from escalating by expressing empathy for the client's feelings. Speak slowly, softly, and clearly to calm the situation. Listen and pay attention to what the person is saying. Restate the client's position to make sure he or she knows you understand the issue. Let the person know that you will help however you can.

If you are not successful and have to take other action (such as summoning help), do so calmly and quietly. Ask your supervisor about the procedure for summoning assistance in your work area.

A NOTE ABOUT DIVERSITY

If your work involves clients who are unfamiliar with American customs of greeting and speech, you should be aware that cultures vary in terms of what kinds of body language, eye contact, and verbal expressions are socially acceptable. For example, some people don't like you to gesture broadly with your arms while talking. Eye contact between a man and a woman can carry different connotations to certain cultures. To avoid agitating a client without knowing it, ask your supervisor or contact the County's Equal Opportunity Division for specific information about different cultures.

You may also find yourself trying to help someone who struggles with English. Slow your speech down — perhaps way down — and pronounce all consonants clearly; try using alternate or simpler wording. Refrain from raising your voice and avoid using slang, jargon, or idioms.

Preventing Violence by Coworkers

There can be times when a *troubled* employee becomes a *troubling* employee. This usually begins when a pattern of behavior escalates to the point where co-workers are afraid of an employee, or it can be a crisis that ultimately leads to a violent act.

Bullying

Addressing bullying behaviors immediately can help prevent acts of violence. Bullying often goes unnoticed in the workplace because it is a slow process of emotional and psychological manipulation that is hard to prove and detect.

Bullying can take place between supervisors and subordinates, as well as between colleagues (“lateral violence”). It can occur between professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, sides) as well as tradespeople (e.g., apprentices, journeymen, masters).

Signs of bullying can include:

- Nonverbal innuendo
- Verbal affront
- Undermining activities
- Withholding information
- Sabotage
- Infighting
- Scapegoating
- Backstabbing

Warning Signs of Violence

People rarely commit a violent act with no warning. A violent act is almost always preceded by a number of warning signs or changes in behavior.

The single best thing you can do to prevent workplace violence by coworkers is to recognize the behaviors and attitudes that may be indicators of disruptive, threatening, or violent behavior. Some of these warning signs are listed below.

Use caution when reading this list — it is not intended as an evaluation tool for you to assess the stability of an employee, since a display of one or more of these signs does not necessarily mean that a person will become violent. Consider these behaviors as a whole, and don't focus on one isolated act. This list is simply a summary of the kinds of behaviors displayed by individuals who have at times committed violent acts. The purpose of this list is to heighten your awareness and to help you to determine if you have a cause for concern.

If you observe a *pattern* of such behaviors or attitudes that causes you concern or that frightens you or your co-workers, please notify your supervisor immediately.

Behaviors:

- Attendance problems, decreased productivity, or inconsistent work patterns
- Upset over recent event(s) at work or home
- Recent major change in behavior, demeanor, appearance
- Recently has withdrawn from normal activities, family, friends, co-workers
- Intimidating, verbally abusive, harasses or mistreats others
- Challenges/resists authority
- Blames others for problems in life or work; suspicious, holds grudges
- Use/abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Unwelcome obsessive romantic attention
- Makes threatening references to other incidents of violence
- Makes threats to harm self, others, or property
- Possesses or is fascinated with weapons
- Has known history of violence
- Has communicated specific proposed act(s) of disruption or violence

Attitude:

- Is isolated or a loner
- Morally superior, self-righteous
- Feels entitled to special rights and that rules don't apply to him/her
- Feels wronged, humiliated, degraded; wants revenge
- Believes to have no choices or options for action except violence

Preventing Violence by Personal Relations

Violence by personal relations – known as domestic violence – occurs when a person in an intimate or familiar relationship is abused by the other person in that relationship. This abuse can enter the workplace if the abuser shows up at the workplace with the intent of harassing or harming the employee.

Since most incidents of domestic violence are perpetrated by individuals outside the County they may not be readily apparent. There will, however, be early warning signs that this type of violence is escalating outside the workplace. The victim may show symptoms such as increased fear, emotional episodes, and/or signs of physical injury. Victims, as well as perpetrators, also show signs of work performance deterioration. Identification of these early warning signs can prevent a serious incident.

The **Domestic Violence** section of this guide, below, provides more detailed information on responding to situations of domestic violence.

Responding to Disruptive, Threatening, or Violent Behavior

Potential or actual violent situations involving clients and employees can escalate if not defused. The warning signs of threatening and violent behavior can generally be grouped into three escalating levels. The following is an attempt to delineate the warning signs and the appropriate response. It should be noted that any single or combination of warning signs at the three levels may be indicative of a potentially violent situation. You will have to make a judgment call as to the appropriate action to take by discerning and evaluating the given situation.

Level One – Early Warning Signs

The person is:

- Intimidating/bullying,
- Discourteous/disrespectful,
- Uncooperative, and/or
- Verbally abusive.

Action Steps

- Observe the behavior in question.
- Report concerns to your supervisor to seek help in assessing/responding to the situation. If the offending person is the reporting employee's immediate supervisor, the employee should notify the next level of supervision. If the offending person is not an employee, the supervisor of the employee reporting the incident is still the appropriate individual to receive and provide initial response.
- Document the observed behavior in question.
- When responding to the person:
 - Respond quietly and calmly. Try to defuse the situation.
 - Do not take the behavior personally. Usually, the behavior has little to do with you, but you are used as a target in the situation.
 - Ask questions. Respectful concern and interest may demonstrate that aggression is not necessary.
 - Be empathetic. Even if you've done nothing wrong, empathy may calm the individual and encourage cooperation. *"I'm sorry that happened. What can we do now that will solve the problem?"*

- Summarize what you hear the individual saying. Make sure you are communicating clearly. In crisis, a person feels humiliated and wants respect and attention. Your summary of the individual's concerns reflects your attention. Focus on areas of agreement to help resolve the concern.
- Use “I” statements. *“I don’t like shouting. Please lower your voice.” “I want to have a good relationship with you. Please do not yell.”*

Level Two – Escalation of Situation

The person:

- Argues with customers, vendors, co-workers, and management,
- Refuses to obey agency policies and procedures,
- Sabotages equipment and steals property for revenge,
- Verbalizes wishes to hurt co-workers and/or management,
- Sends threatening note(s) to co-worker(s) and/or management, and/or
- Sees self as victimized by management (“me against them”).

Action Steps

- If warranted, call 911 and other appropriate emergency contacts for your facility, particularly if the situation requires immediate medical and/or law enforcement personnel.
- Immediately contact your supervisor and, if needed, the supervisor will contact other appropriate official(s) such as functional area experts to seek help in assessing/responding to the situation.
- If necessary, secure your own safety and the safety of others, including contacting people who are in danger (make sure emergency numbers for employees are kept up-to-date and accessible).
- Document the observed behavior in question.

Level Three – Further Escalation

The person displays intense anger resulting in:

- Suicidal threats,
- Physical fights or assaults,
- Destruction of property,
- Display of extreme rage or physically aggressive acts, and/or
- Utilization of weapons to harm others.

Action Steps

If you observe violent or threatening behavior which poses an immediate danger to persons or property:

- Call 911 (or 9-911) and other appropriate emergency contacts for that particular facility, particularly if the situation requires immediate medical and/or law enforcement personnel.
- Remain calm and contact your supervisor.
- Secure your personal safety first.
- Immediately contact others who may be in danger
- Leave the area if your safety is at risk.
- Cooperate with law enforcement personnel when they have responded to the situation.

Encouraged Actions

If you are faced with a hostile situation in the workplace, keep the following tips in mind:

- Keep the situation in your control.
- Stay alert and calm, listen attentively, and ask the person to sit down.
- Respond on your terms - don’t get sucked into their story.
- Be polite but persistent - *“I’m not going to debate you.”*

- Maintain eye contact.
- Position yourself:
 - Stand with your elbows at your waist and your hands in front of you.
 - Stay two arm lengths away from the person.
 - Try to keep a desk or other barrier between you and the person, and make sure that the person does not block your escape route.
 - If the client is directly in front of you, step back so that you are out of striking range. Ask the person questions relevant to his or her complaint.
 - Position yourself at a blade or angle to the client. This minimizes your target size and gives you an opportunity to escape and run away if needed.
- Acknowledge the person's concerns and try to find solutions.
- Speak slowly, softly, and clearly. Avoid being defensive.
- Set ground rules/boundaries, such as, *"When you shout at me, I can't understand what you are saying."*

If you sense that someone is going to commit a violent act any second, don't hesitate to leave immediately. Find an excuse to leave the area, or if necessary, just leave — then get help, from co-workers, Emergency Response Team members, or someone else, depending on the situation. Don't hesitate to call the police at 911 (or 9-911) if necessary. It is better to disrupt a work site than to be injured.

Actions to Avoid

If you find yourself in a potentially threatening or violent situation, avoid the following responses:

- Make false statements or promises you can't keep.
- Explain technical, complicated information when emotions are high.
- Take sides or disagree.
- Take remarks personally.
- Show your anger.
- Patronize.
- Invade the individual's personal space.
- Exhibit cold or hostile body language:
 - Crossing your arms in front of you.
 - Wagging your finger or fist.
 - Clenching your fists.
- Hostile style of verbal communication.
- Making threats or dares.
- Belittle or make the person feel foolish.
- Criticize or act impatient.
- Attempt to "bargain" with a threatening individual.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence occurs when a person in an intimate or familiar relationship is abused by the other person in that relationship. This abuse may be physical, but it can also be verbal, emotional, or sexual. The abuser often seeks to exert power or to isolate and control the victim by cutting off finances, friendships, and other means of support. Domestic violence can involve persons in a variety of relationships:

- Spouse or former spouse.
- Live-in partner or former partner.
- Dating, former dating or engagement relationship.
- A person with whom the victim has had a child.
- An elderly person who is abused by a grown child or other care giver.

Because women are six times more likely than men to be injured by domestic violence, this Guide uses feminine pronouns when referring to domestic violence. However, a victim can also be a male.

It is important to recognize that violent incidents in the workplace may include acts of domestic violence. Often, co-workers and supervisors believe that domestic violence is something that is not their concern, but a private family matter that should not be brought to work. But the problem does spill over into the workplace. Domestic violence accounts for 27% of violent events in the workplace. If the victim has sought shelter or a restraining order, the workplace is frequently the place s/he can be found. It is not uncommon for the perpetrator to show up at the work site to carry out acts of violence against the partner or anyone trying to protect that person.

Response Involving Domestic Violence

In the event the perpetrator shows up at work with the intent of harming the employee and any others who happen to be in the way or involved, follow the procedures described in **Level Three – Further Escalation** above.

If it is known that an employee is being affected by domestic violence, whether or not the perpetrator has shown up at work, it is important to provide support and assistance. Not only is the person at risk for more and usually escalated violence, but it has an impact on the safety and productivity of the entire work force.

If a Co-Worker is Being Abused

If you have reason to believe one of your co-workers may be experiencing domestic violence that is impacting your workplace, discuss your concerns with your supervisor. You might mention that the *Workplace Violence Prevention: A Guide for Supervisors* includes a section on domestic violence. You might also refer your co-worker to the list of resources at the back of this Guide.

If You Are Being Abused

If you are involved in an abusive relationship that is affecting your work, or if you are concerned that a perpetrator may come to the workplace with a violent intent, tell your supervisor or talk to one of the resources listed in Appendix A at the back of this Guide.

You do not have to disclose any details that you don't want to, but it will help your supervisor if you honestly discuss how the situation has been affecting you at work. You should especially let your supervisor know if you are afraid that the perpetrator may come to the workplace and harm you or one of your co-workers.

Keep in mind that your supervisor may need to disclose some information if the safety of the workplace is a concern.

In addition to the support the County will be able to provide you with while at work, you will need support off the job. You may want to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline or one of the resources listed in Appendix A at the back of this Guide. The resources listed under "Shelters" may be particularly helpful since they have trained staff members who can provide emotional support as well as logistical support. Your Employee Assistance Program or your health care provider may also be able to help.

“Stalkers”

Stalking occurs when a perpetrator “willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or harasses another person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for his or her safety, or the safety of his or her immediate family...”² Stalking goes beyond mere harassment in that threats of violence are involved. A stalker will usually fixate on a particular individual with whom he has had a real or imagined relationship. A stalker can be an abusive husband pursuing his wife or an anonymous admirer pursuing a fantasy. Stalking is illegal in California.

² California Penal Code, sec. 646.9

If stalkers encounter a strong boundary at the victim's workplace, they may be deterred. If you are concerned that someone may stalk you at work, tell your supervisor immediately.

The best way to prevent stalking is to not let a relationship, even a casual one, develop or continue any farther than you want it to. Since stalkers have never learned to take “no” for an answer, you must be clear and firm. When declining an unwanted invitation, make sure your answer cannot be interpreted in any way to mean “maybe.” Don't give a reason or an excuse — that can only provide a challenge in the mind of the initiator — and don't waver: say simply and firmly, “I'm absolutely not interested in a relationship with you.”³ If the person does not accept your firm refusal, take the situation seriously and consult one of the resources listed at the back of this Guide. If the person is a co-worker, the County's sexual harassment policy may be of help to you — call the Equal Opportunity Division.

Temporary Restraining Orders

California law permits an employer to obtain a temporary restraining order against a perpetrator (including a perpetrator who is also an employee) who is threatening or stalking an employee, elected official, volunteer, or independent contractor.⁴

If you find yourself in urgent need of protection at any time of the day or night — whether or not the courts are open — you can request an Emergency Protective Order (very short-term) from the law enforcement agency responding to the incident. The danger must be imminent. Call the police department of the city where the incident occurred.

Restraining Orders, whether obtained by you or your employer, can be of value. At the time of this writing, not one of those who obtained a Restraining Order in Santa Clara County has been among the County's domestic violence homicide victims.⁵

But experience has shown that these Orders often do not prevent further stalking; instead, they can trigger a violation of the terms of the Order — or a violent act. Restraining Orders should therefore be used with extreme caution, and only after thorough consultation with threat assessment experts and knowledgeable legal counsel.

If You are a Batterer in a Domestic Violence Situation

If you are an abuser in a domestic violence situation, you should be aware that the Employee Assistance Program has a confidential counseling program for batterers. You may also want to consult one of the other resources in Appendix A: Resources.

Remember that since County policy prohibits threats by County employees, the use of County time, telephones, or other County resources to convey threatening messages will be dealt with through the progressive discipline process. Since domestic violence is illegal, perpetrators can be subject to arrest and prosecution — and separation from County service.

Threats of Violence

Reporting Threats

Threats of violence take many forms. They can be verbal, written, or implied (such as through the use of symbols, objects, or mutilated animals). If you are the subject of a threat of violence at work or if you observe threatening behavior, it is important to document your concerns and report them to your supervisor immediately. As threat assessment expert Dr. Park Dietz said, “You wait at your peril.”⁶ Be prepared to provide your supervisor with details, including who made the treat (if known), and how and

³ Gross, Linden. *To Have or to Harm*, pg. 216.

⁴ Ch. 29, Code of Civil Procedure sec. 527.8

⁵ Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office

⁶ Personal comment during a Violence Seminar, 1994

when the treat was made. Save all evidence of threats, including voice and E-mail messages, notes, and letters.

If, after discussions with your supervisor, you wish to convey your concerns to someone else, report the problem up your department's chain of command. You or your supervisor may not be sure if the threat should be taken seriously. When in doubt, refrain from making hasty judgments, since competent threat assessment requires extensive professional training and experience. If you or your supervisor needs expert consultation, call County Mental Health Director or Mental Health Adult Services.

Bomb Threats

Bomb threats are a unique kind of threat because the stakes are so high. The two most common reasons for bomb threats are:

- The caller knows about a bomb and wants to minimize injury or property damage. (The caller may be the bomber or someone else who has information about the bomb.)
- The caller wants to create an atmosphere of anxiety and panic in order to disrupt normal operations at a County facility.

Most bomb threats are made by phone. Any employee who receives calls directly could receive a bomb threat. Copy the Bomb Threat Checklist in Appendix C: **Bomb Threat Checklist** and keep it under your phone.

The decision to evacuate will be made by the Facility manager based on the amount of information available and whether the call appears to a legitimate threat or a prank. If an evacuation is needed:

- Pay attention to specific evacuation directions.
- Leave doors and windows open to let the blast wave escape.
- Take your brief case, purse, lunch bag, etc. with you to minimize the search.
- The Facility Manager will work with police to keep anyone from re-entering the building.
- Refer to your facility's Emergency Plan.

The search, if required, needs to be done by people who are familiar with the facility. The police will help, but they do not have the resources to do it alone. If you are called upon to help with the search, remember:

- Check your immediate work area and report any suspicious objects to your supervisor or the Facility Manager.
- Do not touch any suspicious object — leave removal and disposal for the Bomb Squad.
- Use normal phones for communication — radios or cellular phones can detonate a bomb.

Suspicious Mail or Packages

Suspicious mail or packages may contain harmful and dangerous materials, such as an explosive (bomb), or radiological, biological, or chemical material.

Ways to identify a suspicious package:

- Packages misaddressed or sent to a generic title instead of to someone in your office.
- Excessive stamp postage as opposed to metered postage.
- Odd markings such as "Personal", "Confidential" or "Do not x-ray."
- Oil or grease stains, or a strange odor escaping the package.
- Unnecessary amounts of tape or string.
- The package is rigid, bulky or beat up looking
- Handwritten or poorly typed address.
- Protruding wires or foil.

If you suspect that a package may be dangerous, do not try to open it. Isolate it, keep everyone back at least 25 feet, open doors and windows, and call 911 (or 9-911).

Threats by Clients

You may receive a threatening letter or phone call from a client. Such threats may arise from a client's frustration with government in general, or with a function of County government in particular, such as the collection of taxes. It may also have arisen from a specific action, such as a denial of a request or claim. If you receive such a threat, save any evidence (such as voice mail messages) and report the threat immediately to your supervisor.

Incidents of Violence

If an actual incident of violence occurs in your workplace, how you and your co-workers respond will depend largely on how well you have prepared. Each incident is different and each response will be different. However, here are some general actions to take:

- Call 911 (or 9-911) immediately. If you can't speak freely, just calling and leaving the receiver off the hook may allow a dispatcher to hear noises that will clarify the nature of the incident.
- Remember to use your panic button if one is installed. If you don't have access to a panic button, you may be able to use the phone or an intercom system to alert co-workers.
- Give the perpetrator what he or she wants. Don't try to be a hero by denying a request for such items as money, keys, documents, or equipment. These can be replaced, lives cannot.
- Flee if you can. If you can't, try to find a hiding place.
- Cooperate fully with police officers on the scene. These are the professionals who know how to handle such situations and may be acting on information that you do not have.
- If you witness an act of workplace violence that does not directly involve you, your actions will depend on your assessment of the situation and your judgment. In some cases, your involvement may help a co-worker; other times it may be better to simply slip quietly away and call 911 (or 9-911).

As soon as you can do so, write down all the details of the incident, including who, what, when, how, and where. Give this information to your supervisor.

Active Shooter

An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims.

Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation. See Appendix D: Active Shooter Situations for guidelines on how to respond in an active shooter situation.

Incident Investigation

Acts of violence or threats will be investigated immediately by the Department Director or designee in order to protect employees from danger, unnecessary anxiety concerning their welfare, and the loss of productivity. Procedures for investigating incidents of workplace violence may include, but are not limited to:

- Visiting the scene of an incident as soon as possible.
- Interviewing injured or threatened employees and witnesses.
- Examining the workplace for security risk factors associated with the incident, including any reports of inappropriate behavior by the perpetrator.
- Determining the cause of the incident.
- Taking mitigating action to prevent the incident from recurring.
- Documenting the witness statements, findings, and mitigating measures taken, if any.

Conclusion

Hopefully, you will never be involved in an incident of workplace violence. But due to the types of services the County provides, and the violent nature of modern society, it is important to understand how to help prevent, prepare for, and respond to such incidents. This Guide provides a starting point for such an understanding, but you should now work with your supervisor and others in your department to fully address specific training and preparedness needs.

Appendix A: Resources

Workplace Violence Contacts:

- Assistance with difficult clients: Office of Human Relations 408-792-2300
- Assistance with difficult employees: Office of Equal Opportunity 408-299-5865
- Building Modifications: Fire Marshal 408-299-5760; FAF Building Operations 408-918-2700; FAF Capital Programs 408-993-4600
- Claims management (in the event of an incident involving injuries or property damage): ESA Risk Management 408-441-4300
- Counseling: Employee Assistance Program 408-241-7772
- Counseling (incident recovery): Center for Living With Dying 408-243-0222
- Cultural guidance: information about the County's Sexual Harassment Policy: Equal Opportunity Division 408-299-5865
- Hiring guidance: Human Resources 408-299-6816
- Incident response: Emergency 911 (or 9-911)
- Incident response: Emergency Response Teams (trained County employees). Ask your Facility Manager for the ERT members in your facility; call 408-441-4343 for program information.
- Landscape pruning: FAF Custodial and Grounds 918-2791
<http://www.sccgov.org/sites/faf/ReportAConcern/Pages/default.aspx>
- Legal advice: County Counsel 408-299-5900
- Media relations: County Executive's Office of Public Affairs 408-299-5151
- Next of kin notification (in the event of serious injury or death): County Executive's Office 408-299-5105
- Personal action guidance, including compulsory medical/fitness for duty examinations: Labor Relations 408-299-5820
- Security Services: County Sheriff's Reserves 408-808-4570
- Threat assessment: Mental Health Director 408-885-5770
- Threat assessment: Mental Health Adult Services 800-704-0900
- Suicide & Crisis 1-855-278-4204 (24/7)
- San Jose Police Family Violence Center Threat Assessment Unit 408-277-3700.
- Training videos: Occupational Safety and Environmental Compliance 408-441-4280

Domestic Violence Contacts:

- Domestic Violence Resources: 24-hour Victim Counseling and Referrals, Battered Women's Shelters, 3-year Protective Orders. Foreign Languages as indicated.
 - ❑ Family Violence Center 125 Gish Rd., San Jose (Domestic Violence Assault Unit of the San Jose Police; other on-site resources) 408-277-3700.
 - ❑ Support Services for Domestic Violence 1-800-572-2782 (English, Spanish 24 hours).
 - ❑ Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence (Central County) (English, Spanish). Crisis: 408-279-2962 (hotline); 408-277-3700 (advocate at the Family Violence Center).
 - ❑ Community Solutions (So County & San Benito County 408-842-7138) English, Spanish 24 hour Crisis Hotline 1-877-363-7238.
 - ❑ Asian Women's Home (San Jose) 408-975-2739 (English, Cambodian, Cantonese, Lao-Mien, Laotian, Mandarin, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese).
 - ❑ MAITRI (San Jose) 1-888-862-4874 (Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Marwari, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telgu, and Urdu)
 - ❑ Asian Women's Shelter (San Francisco) 415-751-0806 24hr Crisis 1-877-751-0880
 - ❑ NISA (Palo Alto) 1-888-275-6472 (North-American Islamic Shelter for the Abused)

- ❑ SAVE (Fremont) 510-794-6055.
- ❑ Monarch Services (Santa Cruz) 831-425-4030 (Watsonville) 831-722-4532
- ❑ Woman, Inc. (updated info on shelter vacancies) (all languages) 24hrs 415-864-4722.
- ❑ National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233

Domestic Violence Batterer's Programs

- ❑ Bata/Starr Counseling 408-450-8370
- ❑ Lighthouse of Hope Counseling Center 408-716-8101
- ❑ Domestic Violence Intervention Collaborative 408-294-0006
- ❑ Turning Point Counseling and Educational Services 408-739-2171

Legal Advice and Attorney Referrals:

- ❑ Asian Law Alliance 408-287-9710
- ❑ Santa Clara Bar Association 408-971-6822
- ❑ Family Court Self Help Center 408-882-2900 x2926
- ❑ Family Violence Counseling Associates 408-246-1507
- ❑ George & Katherine Alexander Community Law Center (restraining orders) 408-288-7030
- ❑ Legal Aid Society of Santa Clara County 408-998-5200
- ❑ National Traffic Safety Institute 408-297-7200
- ❑ Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence (Central County) 408-501-7550
- ❑ Senior Adults Legal Assistance 408-295-5991
- ❑ Support Network for Battered Women 408-541-6100 24hr Crisis Line 1-800-572-2782

Spanish:

- ❑ YMCA Support Network (North County) (Spanish) 800-572-2782
- ❑ Community Solutions (South County) (Spanish) 408-842-7138
- ❑ Family Children Services of Silicon Valley (English/Spanish) 408-292-9353

Other Domestic Violence Resources:

- ❑ Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office 408-299-3099
- ❑ Child Abduction Unit (Parental) 408-792-2921
- ❑ Victim/Witness Assistance Center 408-295-2656
- ❑ Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting 408-299-2071
- ❑ Adult Protective Services 408-975-4900
- ❑ Dependents or Elders in Facilities: Long-Term Care Ombudsman daytime hours 408-944-0567; after 5 PM 800-231-4024, or call local police
- ❑ Parental Stress Hotline 408-279-8228
- ❑ Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center 408-293-4525

Workplace and Domestic Violence Websites:

- ❑ U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/>
- ❑ U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA– Healthcare:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/healthcarefacilities/violence.html>

- ❑ Cal/OSHA Guidelines for Workplace Security:

https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/worksecurity.html

- ❑ California Department of Public Health, Domestic Violence / Intimate Partner Violence:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/injviosaf/Pages/DomesticViolence.aspx>

- **General Information and Referral Lines:**

- ❑ United Way 2-1-1 (in Santa Clara County) or 1-866-390-6845. Outside Santa Clara County 1-866-896-3587

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- Littler, Mendelson, et al. *Terror and Violence in the Workplace*. Self-Published 1994. Extensive coverage of *legal issues*.

If you need general information:

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- Lemon, Nancy. *Domestic Violence Law – A Comprehensive Overview of Cases and Sources*. Austin & Winfield (to order call (800) 99-AUSTIN).
- Oregon/OSHA: *Guidelines for Preventing Violence in the Workplace*. Salem, OR.
- Steinman, Michael, editor: *Woman Battering: Policy Responses*. Cincinnati OH, Anderson Publishing Company.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture: *Departmental Administration; Human Resources Management: Domestic Violence Awareness Handbook*.
- U.S. Public Health Service, Region IX: *The Prevention of Workplace Violence*. San Francisco, Self-published 1994. *Conference proceedings*.

Training Resources

- Call to Action: Managing Violence in the Workplace and other videos are available for free loan from the County Supervisors Association of California Excess Insurance Authority. Contact OSEC at 408-441-4280 for details.
- Videos available from Occupational Safety and Environmental Compliance at 408-441-4280 include:
 - ❑ Conflict Communication Skills
 - ❑ Diffusing Hostility Through Customer Service
 - ❑ Nonviolent Crisis Intervention: Preventative Techniques
 - ❑ Nonviolent Crisis Intervention: Therapeutic Physical Intervention
 - ❑ Public Building Safety
 - ❑ Reduce Your Risk (vehicle related crime)
 - ❑ Workplace Violence
 - ❑ Workplace Violence: The First Line of Defense
 - ❑ Workplace Violence: The Calm Before the Storm
 - ❑ Violence in the Workplace
- The District Attorney's Office offers Domestic Violence training and has Domestic Violence videos available for loan 408-295-2656.
- Other resources may also be available including online safety, please contact OSEC.

Appendix B: Warning Signs of Escalating Behavior

Five Warning Signs of Escalating Behavior

Confusion	
Warning Signs	Possible Response
Behavior characterized by bewilderment or distraction. Unsure or uncertain of the next course of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to their concerns. • Ask clarifying questions. • Give them factual information.

Frustration	
Warning Signs	Possible Response
Behavior characterized by reaction or resistance to information. Impatience. Feeling a sense of defeat in the attempt of accomplishment. May try to bait you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See steps above. • Relocate to quiet location or setting. • Reassure them. • Make a sincere attempt to clarify concerns

Blame	
Warning Signs	Possible Response
Placing responsibility for problems on everyone else. Accusing or holding you responsible. Finding fault or error with the action of others. They may place blame directly on you. Crossing over to potentially hazardous behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See steps above. • Disengage, bring second party into discussion. • Use teamwork approach. • Draw client back to facts. • Use probing questions. • Create “Yes” momentum

Anger — Judgment call required	
Warning Signs	Possible Response
Characterized by a visible change in body posture and disposition. Actions include pounding fists, pointing fingers, shouting or screaming. This signals very risky behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize venting techniques. • Don’t offer solutions. • Don’t argue with comments made. • Prepare to evacuate or isolate. • Contact supervisor and/or security office

Hostility — Judgment call required	
Warning Signs	Possible Response
Physical actions or threats which appear imminent. Acts of physical harm or property damage. Out-of-control behavior signals they have crossed over the line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disengage and evacuate. • Try to isolate person if it can be done safely. • Alert supervisor and contact security office or 911 immediately

Appendix C: Bomb Threat Checklist

Place this list under your telephone for easy reference.

1	Exact Wording of the Threat:
	Remain calm and keep the caller on the line as long as possible. Ask to have the message repeated.

2	Ask the caller: There are a lot of people who could be injured. What can you tell me?
	When is the bomb going to explode?
	Where is the bomb right now?
	What kind of bomb is it?
	What will cause it to explode?
	Did you place the bomb?
	Why?
	What is your address?
What is your name?	

3	Report the threat immediately to your supervisor, the Facility Manager, and (in some cases) 911 (or 9-911).
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4	Be prepared to describe the threat in as much detail as possible to the police. Record information here.				
	A	Voice characteristics:		Sex: ____	Age: ____
		<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Loud	<input type="checkbox"/> Distinct	<input type="checkbox"/> Nasal
		<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Laughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Slurred	<input type="checkbox"/> Stuttering
		<input type="checkbox"/> Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> Crying	<input type="checkbox"/> Lisp	<input type="checkbox"/> Cracking
		<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal	<input type="checkbox"/> Raspy	<input type="checkbox"/> Disguised
	<input type="checkbox"/> Rapid	<input type="checkbox"/> Deep	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearing Throat	<input type="checkbox"/> Accent	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Ragged	<input type="checkbox"/> Deep Breathing	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiar	
	If the voice is familiar, whom does it sound like?				
	B	Background Noises:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Street Noises		<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Local		
<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant		<input type="checkbox"/> Household Noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Long Distance		
<input type="checkbox"/> Factory Machinery		<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear		
<input type="checkbox"/> PA System		<input type="checkbox"/> Motor(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Static		
<input type="checkbox"/> Office Machinery	<input type="checkbox"/> Voices	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____			
C	Threat Language:				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Well Spoken	<input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent	<input type="checkbox"/> Irrational		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Foul	<input type="checkbox"/> Taped	<input type="checkbox"/> Message read		
D	Other Details:				
	Remarks:				
	Time of Threat:	Date:	Phone # where threat was received:		
	Your Name:		Your Position:		

DOXY'S

Appendix D: Active Shooter Situations

An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims.

Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation.

How to Respond When an Active Shooter is in Your Vicinity

If you hear shots fired, resist the temptation to investigate the cause. Do not go to the area. Do not attempt to try to determine what is happening.

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember that customers and clients are likely to follow the lead of employees and managers during an active shooter situation.

Evacuate

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
- Leave your belongings behind
- Help others escape, if possible
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
- Keep your hands visible
- Follow the instructions of any police officers
- Do not attempt to move wounded people
- Call 911 when you are safe

Hide out

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.

Your hiding place should:

- Be out of the active shooter's view
- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door)
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:

- Lock the door
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door
- Silence your cell phone and/or pager
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)
- Remain quiet

If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- Remain calm
- Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location
- If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen

Take action against the active shooter

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her
- Throwing items and improvising weapons
- Yelling
- Committing to your actions

When Law Enforcement Arrives

Law enforcement's purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard.

The first officers to arrive to the scene will not stop to help injured persons. Expect rescue teams comprised of additional officers and emergency medical personnel to follow the initial officers. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They may also call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the premises.

How to react:

- Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions
- Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets)
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
- Keep hands visible at all times
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety
- Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises