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### *In this issue ...*

- Violence in the Workplace Risk Factors

*Understanding the Risk Factors of Workplace Violence*

- Security

*Developing an Agency Security and Asset Protection Program*

- Home Heating Hazards

*CPSC and CDC Warn of Hazards Associated with Heating Appliances*

- Recall Information

*Computer Battery Recall Information*

- Auto Thefts

*Tips from Arizona Automobile Theft Association on Vehicle Theft Prevention*

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## Violence in the Workplace Risk Factors

Mention the words “Workplace Violence” and often the first thing that comes to mind is a vision of a mad gunman bursting into the workplace with weapons drawn. According to the Violence in the Workplace Research Institute these types of events are the minority. What is far more common are deaths and injuries as a result of robbery in the workplace. The Research Institute estimates that every workday, an estimated 16,400 violent threats are made in the workplace. A study at the US Department of Justice discovered 1,063 workplace homicides in 1993. Coworkers or former employees were involved in 59 of these killings; 43 were committed by customers, tenants or hospital patients. The study predicted that **one in four employees will be victimized by workplace violence** and found that workplace homicides increased slightly in 1994 to 1,071.

There have been a number of studies to examine specific areas of workplace violence. The Northwestern Life Insurance Company found that one out of four full-time workers had been harassed, threatened or attacked on the job, leaving the victim angry, fearful, stressed or depressed. Coworkers accounted for most of the harassment; customers were responsible for additional attacks. The study further indicated that employers with effective grievance, harassment and security programs had lower rates of workplace violence.

There are a number of factors that may increase a worker's risk for workplace assault. These factors include:

- Contact with the public
- Exchange of money
- Delivery of passengers, goods or services
- Having a mobile workplace such as a taxicab or police cruiser
- Working with unstable or volatile persons in health care, social service or criminal justice settings
- Working alone or in small numbers
- Working late at night or during early morning hours
- Working in high-crime areas
- Guarding valuable property or possessions
- Working in community-based settings

## Prevention Strategies -Environmental Designs and Administrative Controls

**Barriers.** One of the most effective strategies for preventing assaults and violence against employees is the use of environmental design controls. Physical separation of workers from customers, clients and the general public through the use of barriers or enclosures is an effective way to prevent violent attacks from occurring. The challenge with this control is balancing the need for ease of operation. Often barriers are not put in place because of the need to ensure adequate customer service. There are, however, several options that create a barrier between customers and employees without installing a cage or other physical separation of glass.

*Administrative controls are another effective approach to prevention. These controls include accessing the work environment (physical) and the tasks that employee perform in the workplace.*

This can be accomplished through the design of the work area.

- Work areas that employ depth of counter space between customer and employee.
- Designing the work area so the employee can escape and is not cornered in a small space should a customer become violent or aggressive.
- Customer service areas that are monitored through security cameras or on-site security that discourage aggression or violence.
- The use of security guards or receptionists to screen persons entering the workplace and controlling access to actual work areas is also an effective method barrier employment.

**Visibility and Lighting.** Visibility and lighting are important environmental design considerations. Making high-risk areas visible to more people and installing good external lighting can help decrease the risk of workplace assaults.

- Entrances and exits from the workplace should be well lit, controlled and monitored if necessary. This may include an “employee only” entrance where non-employee use is prohibited.
- Installation of employee security card access systems to prevent unauthorized access to the facility.
- Evaluate entrances and exits to ensure that there are no areas where potential attackers can hide. This could include blind areas created by plants, bushes and trees. Keep the vegetation well trimmed and to a minimum.
- Installation of panic bar doors that are locked from the outside but facilitate easy exit from the interior in an emergency.
- Employee parking areas should be as close as possible to the entrance and exit and well lit. Installation of monitoring devices and/or physical security should be considered for work areas located in high crime areas.

**Administrative Control.** Administrative controls are another effective approach to prevention. These controls include accessing the work environment (physical) and the tasks that employee perform in the workplace. This assessment can be conducted by the agency loss prevention committee, the loss prevention coordinator, the facilities manager or other committees assigned by the agency director. Once the assessment is complete, the agency can move forward with the development and implementation of administrative controls.

- Policies that clearly indicate a zero tolerance of workplace violence and provide mechanisms by which incidents can be reported and handled.
- Training and education efforts are clearly needed to accompany such policies. This training should include discussion of the agency’s zero tolerance policy, what constitutes threats, harassment and intimidation and how to report incidents to management.
- Periodic assessment of current security policies and procedures to ensure they are current and fully implemented.
- Planning for a crisis. Despite the best planning, policies and procedures an incident could occur. Ensure that your management team and employees know what to do should an incident occur. This is best done through drills that practice what will happen in the event of a real emergency in the workplace.

While we all hope that a violent incident will not occur in the workplace, there are no concrete guarantees. The most thorough planned policies, procedures and controls may someday be put to the test. If you would like more information of safeguards against violence in the workplace there are numerous web sites available with a wealth of information. Some of these web sites include the Workplace Violence Research Institute at [www.workplaceviolence.com](http://www.workplaceviolence.com) or OSHA at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). You can also contact the Capital Police for assistance by calling (602) 542-0362. They can provide training related to crime prevention and crisis intervention.

*Arizona  
Administrative Code,  
R2 -10-207 9, requires  
agencies develop and  
implement security  
programs to protect  
the safety and security  
of employees, the  
general public and the  
agency assets.*

## Establishing an Agency Security Program



The development and implementation of agency specific security programs is required under **R2-10-207 9**. Agency security programs are a critical part of an overall agency loss prevention program. The aim of this program should focus on development and implementation of processes and procedures to protect the safety and security of employees, the agencies assets and the general public.

Security programs will vary depending on the unique aspects of the agency. For instance, an agency may need to develop procedures to protect employees from risk associated with money handling operations and working in remote locations.

Arizona Administrative Code R2 -10-207 9 requires, as a minimum, that agencies implement:

- Security escorts (if needed), exterior lighting, identification badges and electronic systems
- Labeling systems, inventory control procedures, property removal procedures and key control systems
- Building and ground security systems, alarm systems, electronic surveillance, perimeter fencing and security patrol services (as applicable)

Depending on the size of the agency, one person or a team within the agency should be responsible for coordinating the development of the plan. If a team approach is used, consider assigning employees representing facilities maintenance, information technology systems (computer data), key supervisors and employees from geographically separated facilities. The agency Loss Prevention Coordinator will usually be the person coordinating the efforts of the plan development and reporting progress to the agency Loss Prevention Committee who will implement the procedures required.

When developing an agency security plan look at the following elements:

### **Employee Security Issues/Concerns**

- Employees whose duties require handling money are at increased risk of danger from theft and robbery. If employees must handle money transactions, ensure that procedures are developed to protect them from the inherent dangers. Some considerations may be hiring a contract service to transport money to banking facilities for deposit, hidden “panic alarms” at the customer service counters, periodic training in theft and robbery prevention techniques, video surveillance cameras in the customer service area and barriers to prevent unauthorized access in areas where cash is handled or stored as well as the installation of safes or vaults.
- Buddy systems or escorts for employees who work after hours or in remote locations.
- Employee education and training programs on security risks they may be exposed to in the course of employment.
- Electronic access into employee work areas.
- Employee identification badges.
- Procedures for reporting security issues or concerns.
- Procedures for reporting domestic violence issues that may impact the security of those in the workplace.

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*Home heating equipment is one of the most common causes of residential structure fires, second only to cooking fires.*

## Facility and Resource Protection

- Labeling systems for identification of state property. This may be in the form of labels affixed to the property or engraving identification marks on the equipment itself.
- Inventory control procedures to ensure equipment is maintained in the agency.
- Key control systems to limit access to facilities and property.
- Adequate facility lighting.
- Adequate storage for property and equipment.
- Fencing and/or alarm systems.

If you need more information or assistance in the development of your agency security program, the Capitol Police have an outstanding program for training managers and employees on a wide range of issues related to workplace and domestic violence. They can be contacted at 602-542-0362. Additionally, you can contact your agency assigned loss prevention consultant within Risk Management for assistance.

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## CPSC and CDC Warn of Winter Home Heating Hazards and Remind Consumers to Replace Smoke and CO Alarm Batteries

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are urging consumers to schedule a **professional inspection** of all fuel-burning heating systems, including furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves, water heaters, chimneys, flues and vents. According to CPSC Acting Chairman Nancy Nord, "The best way to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning is to have a professional inspection every year and install working CO alarms in your home."

Each year, at least 15,000 Americans suffer from unintentional, non-fire related CO exposure, according to CDC estimates. CPSC reports that an estimated 188 people died in 2002 from CO poisoning associated with consumer products. The leading source of these poisonings is heating systems. According to the CPSC, an estimated 103 deaths were associated with home heating systems that use liquid propane gas, natural gas, kerosene, oil, coal or wood. According to CDC, the most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. CO poisoning can cause loss of consciousness and death. People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from CO poisoning before experiencing symptoms.

Home heating equipment is one of the most common causes of residential structure fires, second only to cooking fires. CPSC statistics show that fireplaces and chimneys are the number one source of home heating equipment fires. They account for about 21,600, or 60 percent, of the nearly 36,000 estimated home heating equipment fires each year from 1999-2003. To help prevent deaths and injuries, CPSC and CDC urge consumers to:

- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Install battery-operated CO and smoke alarms in your home.
- Locate CO alarms outside the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area.
- Locate smoke alarms on each level of the house and inside every bedroom.
- Replace smoke and CO alarm batteries when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall and check batteries monthly.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, lightheaded or nauseous.

### **Fireplaces:**

- Have flues and chimneys inspected before each heating season for leakage and/or blockage by creosote or debris.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until all ashes are cool. Never close the damper if the ashes are still warm. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.
- Store fireplace ashes in a fire resistant container and cover it with a lid. Keep the container outdoors and away from combustibles.

### **Space heaters:**

- Place the heater on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep the heater at least three feet from bedding, drapes, furniture and other flammable materials. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- To prevent the risk of fire, NEVER leave a space heater on when you go to sleep or place a space heater close to any sleeping person. Turn the space heater off if you leave the area.
- Use a space heater that has been tested to the latest safety standards and certified by a nationally-recognized testing laboratory. These heaters will have the most up-to-date safety features; older space heaters may not meet the newer safety standards. An unvented gas space heater that meets current safety standards will shut off if oxygen levels fall too low.

To learn more about the hazards associated with home heating systems, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).



*Computer  
Battery  
Recalls  
Continue*

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## **Computer Battery Recalls**

Several computer manufacturers have announced a recall involving Sony Lithium-Ion batteries. The recall involves IBM-Lenovo, Dell, Toshiba and Apple batteries.

### **Sony VAIO® Battery**

Sony initiated a global replacement program for certain lithium-ion notebook computer battery packs manufactured by the company to address the concerns over recent over-heating incidents in certain notebooks manufactured by companies other than Sony. A free battery replacement will be provided if you have one of the recalled battery systems. The replacement program only applies to certain models and serial numbers of the VAIO battery packs. To check if your battery is included in the recall, visit the following web address: <http://esupport.sony.com>.

### **Apple Announces Recall of Batteries Used in iBook and PowerBook Computers**

Apple has determined that certain lithium-ion batteries containing cells manufactured by Sony Corporation of Japan pose a safety risk that may result in overheating under rare circumstances. The affected batteries were sold worldwide from October 2003 through August 2006 for use with the following notebook computers: 12-inch iBook G4, 12-inch PowerBook G4 and 15-inch PowerBook G4. Apple is voluntarily recalling the affected batteries and has initiated a worldwide exchange program to provide eligible customers with a new replacement battery, free of charge. This program is being conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and other international safety authorities.

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## Arizona Auto Thefts

The Arizona Auto Theft Authority (AATA) indicates that if you live in Arizona, the chances of your car being stolen is much higher than other parts of the country. In fact, the Federal Bureau of Investigations 2004 Uniform Crime Report indicates that Arizona ranks second in the country for auto thefts. Arizona had 54,905 vehicles stolen in 2005.

The Arizona Automobile Theft Authority is a state agency whose mission is to deter vehicle theft through a cooperative effort by supporting law enforcement activities, vertical prosecution, and public awareness/community education programs. They are funded by the Insurance Industry by a mandatory \$1 per year assessment on every vehicle insured in the State of Arizona. In addition to the Watch Your Car program, the AATA also funds the Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force and issues grants to local criminal justice agencies for law enforcement, vertical prosecution, and public awareness/community education activities.



Professional thieves can steal any car but make them work for yours. To prevent thefts, the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) recommends "Layered Protection." The more layers of protection on your vehicle, the more difficult it is to steal.

### Layer #1 -- Common Sense

An unlocked vehicle with a key in the ignition is an open invitation to any thief, regardless of which anti-theft device you use. The common sense approach to protection is the simplest and most cost-effective way to thwart would-be thieves.

- Lock your car - ***half of all vehicles stolen are left unlocked***
- Park in well-lit areas - car thefts occur at night more than half the time
- Park in attended lots - car thieves do not like witnesses
- Do not leave your vehicle running and unattended
- Completely close your car windows
- Do not leave valuables in plain view
- Park with your wheels turned toward the curb
- Always use your emergency brake when parking
- If you have a garage, use it - when you do, lock both the vehicle and the garage door

### Layer #2 -- Warning Device

The second layer of protection is a visible or audible device which alerts thieves that your vehicle is protected. Popular second layer devices include:

- Audible alarms
- Steering wheel locks and steering column locks
- Brake locks and tire locks
- Identification markers in or on vehicle
- Protective Window Laminates
- Microdots applied to various surfaces on vehicle, which are imprinted with identification information.
- Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etching on vehicle windows.

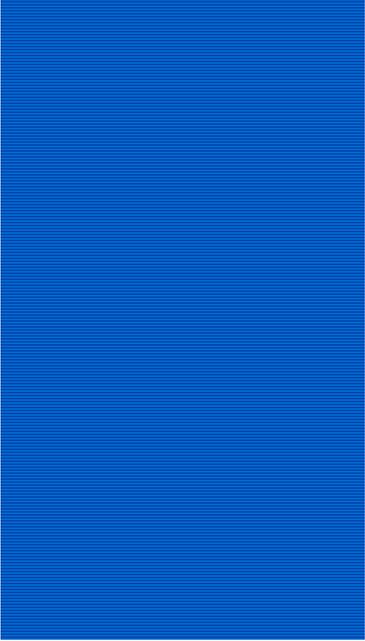
*To prevent thefts, the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) recommends "Layered Protection." The more layers of protection on your vehicle, the more difficult it is to steal.*

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*Telephone*

*1-888-668-4433  
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### **Layer #3 -- Immobilizing Device**

This third layer of protection is a device which prevents thieves from bypassing your ignition and hot-wiring the vehicle. Some electronic devices have computer chips in ignition keys. Other devices inhibit the flow of electricity of fuel to the engine until a hidden switch or button is activated. Popular third layer devices include:

- Smart keys
- High security locks & keys
- Fuse cut-offs
- Kill switches
- Starter, ignition and fuel disablers

### **Layer #4 -- Tracking Device**

The final layer of protection is a tracking device which emits a signal to a police or monitoring station when the vehicle is reported stolen. Tracking devices are very effective in helping authorities recover stolen vehicles.

For more information on how to prevent vehicle theft, contact the Arizona Automobile Theft Authority at (602) 364-2886.