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Workplace Violence Mitigation Guidance for Security Leaders

Workplace violence continues to pose a threat not only to employees and their organizations but to customers and bystanders. U.S. states including California and Texas are joining industry groups and other world governments in requiring organizations to implement measures to protect employees against violence in the workplace. Such regulation provides companies an opportunity to take action that shows their workforces across the board – not only in regulated areas –that they prioritize employee safety.

To further that goal, in June the Security Executive Council held the Workplace Violence Management State of the Industry Next Generation Security Leader Program, hosted in Houston by MD Anderson Cancer Center and Rice University. More than 130 attendees engaged virtually and in-person in highly interactive conversations with fellow security practitioners and session leaders, including security leaders from the host organizations as well as from Ralph Lauren, the City of Houston, Allina Health, Tanger Outlets, Kroger and more.

Here are just a few of the main takeaways from the event.

Document Exhaustively

Numerous presenters emphasized that consistent documentation in a workplace violence program is critical, from conceptualization and program development through daily operation. Even the concept of “workplace” needs to be defined and documented. Does it include home offices? Tenanted buildings? Parking garages? Documenting this definition will help ensure the workplace violence mitigation program’s scope aligns with its mission.

Speakers recommended that security leaders develop and document clear policy on acceptable behavior in the workplace, including repercussions for violating policy and how the organization

will use technology to identify and/or monitor troubling behaviors. This includes a code of conduct for clients/customers and visitors to the site.

Once the program is active, carefully document and compile all reports made about behaviors of concern. More than one presenter mentioned situations in which red flag behaviors were reported, even multiple times, but those reports weren't put on paper or compiled with others from other sources that together would have foreshadowed an issue. In addition, some speakers recommended naming the program "workplace violence management" rather than "prevention" or "mitigation." This could both help management understand that security programs cannot entirely prevent risk and improve the organization's defensibility if a workplace violence incident occurs.

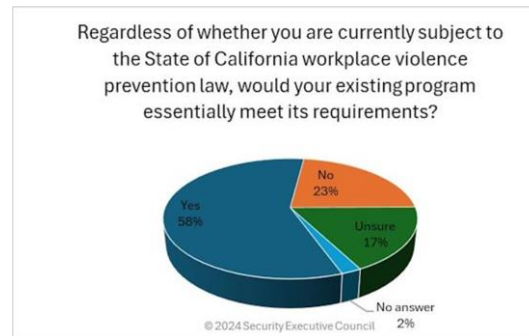
Maximize Partnership

Workplace violence management crosses domains. It requires the active participation of critical incident management, investigations, human resources, the employee assistance program, physical security, local emergency services, and more. The following are just a few ideas presenters shared on how to maximize and nurture those partnerships.

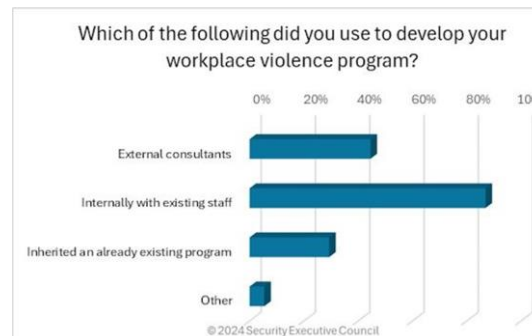
- Partner with law enforcement and human resources for de-escalation training and stress management workshops
- In the hospital setting, engage police departments to train bedside teams to recognize potential violent behaviors and learn how to respond and report.
- Reach out to prospective external partners and be responsive when they reach out to you.

SURVEY RESULTS

In a July 2024 Security Barometer quick poll, 58% of respondents, regardless of whether they are subject to the new State of California WPV mitigation law, felt that the program would meet the law's requirements.



When asked who participated in the development of their WPV program, 87% utilized existing staff and 45% utilized external consultants. 29% respondents inherited an already existing program.



For full quick poll results:
<https://securityexecutivecouncil.com/insight/program-best-practices/security-barometer-results-workplace-violence-prevention-programs-2113>

- Strong existing relationships sometimes work faster than formal organizational charts immediately after an incident.
- Deliberate practice is critical for ongoing readiness. Incident management skills are perishable.
- When reaching out to an external partner, identify what you have to offer and bring something to the table. For your local first responders, that may be access to video, or simply space for training, meeting, and exercises.
- Don't forget that some of your greatest partners are the community around your facilities. Partner with media outlets to help them understand your cultural and operational perspective on incidents.
- Partner with other companies to share resources and information. There's no such thing as competition when lives are at stake.

Augment with Technology

Several speakers discussed the force-multiplying potential of various technologies in the behavior identification and violence management space. These include:

- Structured threat assessment App for workplace targeted violence risk
- Access control measures
- Video analytics, including license plate recognition and weapons-related behavior detection
- Traditional walk-through and wand weapons detection
- Lone worker monitoring through Apps or wearable devices
- Forensic linguistic analysis tools to find and identify language of concern
- Simulation technology/VR headsets to provide experiential readiness learning to frontline workers.

Engage all stakeholders early in new technology rollouts, one presenter emphasized. Privacy can be a major concern. Don't catch employees or management off guard.

Another important tip shared: Don't forget to collect and use data. Data is the new currency. It can help assess, track, analyze, and understand incident likelihood and outcomes for continuous and iterative improvement.

Participants in the June event received information about several specific technology and service providers who have been vetted by the SEC through its [Solution Innovation Partner \(SIP\) program](#).

Socialize the Program

One of the most frequently revisited ideas in the event was the importance of consistently socializing workplace violence management measures and expectations with all stakeholders in a way that is digestible, clear, and open. Socialization, said multiple speakers, can make or break the program.

Socializing the program entails much more than ensuring senior management is aware of policy and processes. It means threading the program into the fabric of the corporate culture and working toward active and engaged participation from all involved managers and frontline employees as well.

When socializing the program, be prepared to see an increase in requests for assessments and consultations. This may not mean an increase in actual incidents; it may mean your internal marketing is improving awareness and helping employees and frontline workers to see security as a resource.

Effective socialization also requires the workplace violence management program to make good on its promises to employees. If they report suspicious behavior and never receive a follow-up or never see any action taken because of such reports, they are unlikely to continue sharing information.

Next Steps

At the end of the SEC event, 100% of attendees reported they would recommend the program to others, and 92% said they would be interested in attending other Next Generation Security Leader events. If you'd like to stay up to date on upcoming Next Generation Security Leader content and programs, [subscribe to our Insight Newsletter](#) .

The Security Executive Council can help security practitioners build and strengthen their workplace violence mitigation programs. [Contact us to find out how.](#)

Visit the Security Executive Council web site to view more resources in the [Program Best Practices : Protecting People](#) series.

About the Security Executive Council

The SEC is the leading research and advisory firm focused on corporate security risk mitigation solutions. Having worked with hundreds of companies and organizations we have witnessed the proven practices that produce the most positive transformation. Our subject matter experts

have deep expertise in all aspects of security risk mitigation strategy; they collaborate with security leaders to transform security programs into more capable and valued centers of excellence. Watch our [3-minute video](#) to learn more.

Contact us at: contact@secleader.com

Website: <https://www.securityexecutivecouncil.com/>