

OHG Standard

Setting the *standard* in Occupational Medicine

October 2003

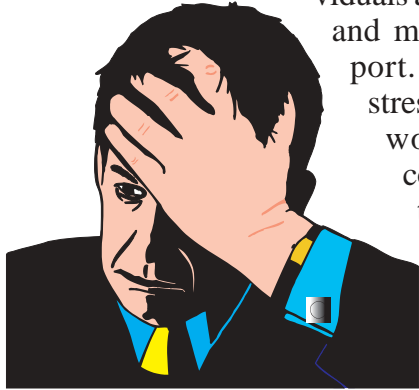
Occupational Health Group is a service offered to the business community of North Alabama by Decatur General Hospital and Huntsville Hospital Systems

Workplace Violence: Recognizing the Signs

Carol Walker, PhD, ABPP, CLCP
NeuroLife, Inc.

Workplace violence has been declared a national epidemic by the CDC; according to the FBI, it accounts for over 17% of occupational deaths yearly. Workplace violence may vary in intensity from verbal insults between coworkers to murder of a coworker or others in the workplace.

The profile that has been developed by the FBI for a workplace killer is a white male in his thirties or forties who has lost his job or is in danger of losing it. These individuals are often socially isolated and may lack emotional support. Other environmental stressors may be present and workplace problems become "the straw that broke the camel's back".



Warning signs may be seen prior to acts of violence and may be exhibited to family members

or coworkers. The signs can include frequent reference to mass murder; fascination with the military, police or survivalism, intimidating comments or outright threats, or feelings of persecution. Individuals with psychological problems or those who abuse alcohol or other drugs are more prone to violence. For example, people with schizophrenia are 13% more likely to behave violently. The risk is substantially higher than this in individuals who abuse alcohol or other drugs. The increased risk for alcohol abusers is 25% and for abusers of other drugs 35%. The effects of these risk factors are additive. That is, an individual with a psychological disorder and drug or alcohol abuse has an even greater risk of committing a violent act, than an individual with just a psychological disorder. While there is no workplace setting that is invulnerable to workplace violence, 56% of workplace homicides occur in the trade and service industries. As

evidenced by the recent occurrences at Labor Ready and the Marriott in Huntsville and at Lockheed-Martin in Meridian, Mississippi, these violent acts occur in all work settings and appear unpredictable. What indicators may alert managers to potential problems? Some of the indicators include excessive tardiness or absences, an increased need for supervision, reduced productivity, strained coworker relationships, and obvious psychological problems or high levels of stress. In these cases, it is crucial that an assessment be made by the management team. The first step, once a problem has been identified, is documentation of the employee's behavior in order to develop a profile. However, the best prevention is an emphasis on pre-employment screening, both through a thorough background and job history search and in some cases, a psychological pre-employment screening. If an employee is thought to have potential for a violent act, it is important to have the employee undergo a psychological fitness for duty evaluation. While neuropsychologists cannot determine with 100% certainty the potential for violence, they are skilled in the assessment of behavior and abilities. The information gleaned from the assessment is used to develop a profile to make decisions regarding additional steps to assist both the employer and employee. Consultation with a board certified clinical psychologist or neuropsychologist ensures that the professional performing the evaluation possesses the critical skills needed to protect the employer, employee, and the others in the workplace environment. It is important that the neuropsychologist or psychologist performing the evaluation have legitimate credentials and the requisite experience needed to evaluate potentially violent individuals.



There are a number of websites one may visit to obtain additional information on this topic, including the OSHA website. On the NeuroLife website (www.NeurolifeInc.com) under Samples, you will find a full text version of my presentation on Workplace Violence, which contains information that is beyond the scope of this article. The presentation includes "25 Ways to Prevent Workplace Violence During Terminations" by William S. Frank (used with permission). Additionally, in order to assist you with choosing a professional with whom to consult, you can access a paper discussing the selection of a neuropsychologist or psychologist to perform needed evaluations.

The cost of workplace violence is immense in terms of loss of life and financial loss. There are 20 people murdered weekly and 18,000 more are assaulted in the United States (Montoya, 1997). Incidents of workplace violence cost employers approximately 4.2 billion dollars per year. Thus, the incentive for creating a policy to address workplace violence is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.

OHG Directory

Administration	256/922-6675
Marketing and Business Development	256/922-6675
Billing Department	256/922-6670
OHG - Decatur	256/353-4325
OHG - Huntsville	256/265-7000
OHG - Madison	256/774-7300
OHG - Scottsboro	256/259-1555
Wellness Services	256/922-6699

www.OHGonline.org

Occupational Hearing Conservation Training

Jennifer Geist, M.S., COHC

Hearing loss continues to plague our nation's workforce. According to Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) estimates, "at least 1 million workers in manufacturing industries alone have sustained job-related hearing loss". When considering all types of employment, more than 9 million workers are exposed to potentially hazardous noise levels. The good news is that all noise-related hearing loss can be prevented with a comprehensive hearing conservation program.

There are many benefits of a hearing conservation program. They include the following:

- Prevention of noise-induced hearing loss. Currently, there is no cure for noise-related hearing loss. That is why prevention is so important.
- Preservation of quality of life. Many employees say that they do not care if they lose the ability to hear loud tones as a result of noise-induced hearing loss. However, they may not realize that they will lose the ability to hear birds chirp or the ability to hear their grandchildren's voices. Hearing loss definitely affects one's quality of life.
- Decrease in worker's compensation costs.
- Compliance with OSHA requirements.

Occupational Health Group is offering a 3-day Occupational Hearing Conservation Course October 28-30. The course includes all topics required by CAOHC (The Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation) guidelines as well as other areas of importance to hearing conservation.

Emphasis will be on:

OSHA Hearing Conservation Standard (including important information regarding the new recordability changes)

- Medical-legal aspects of hearing loss
- Workers' compensation
- Employee education and training
- Selection and fitting of hearing protection
- Record keeping

This 3-day course is designed to teach the skills necessary to establish and maintain an effective hearing conservation program that will meet and exceed OSHA standards and individual state requirements. For more information, call OHG Wellness at 256-922-6699.

We hope to see all of you there!

OHG

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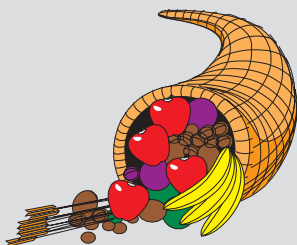
Holiday Closings:

All OHG Clinics will be closed
in observance of the following holidays:

Thanksgiving...November 27 and 28

Christmas..... December 24 and 25

New Year's.....December 31
(close at 2:00 p.m.)
January 1, 2004



Beat the Bug!



For over 10 years, OHG's Wellness Services has been bringing flu vaccinations directly to companies in North Alabama, at a very reasonable cost. Employees stay healthy, minimizing time off the job.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, flu vaccine is the single most effective means for preventing infection with the flu virus and the complications associated with flu. But everyone who wants to be protected from the flu needs to be re-vaccinated yearly because the flu virus changes each year. For best protection, immunization should occur between October and December.

The flu season is right around the corner. The good news is that the influenza vaccine is very effective in preventing this serious illness. Can you afford not to take advantage of this opportunity?

The cost for on-site flu shots is as follows:

Over 500 participants	\$12.00
301-500 participants	\$13.00
101-300 participants	\$14.00
10-100 participants	\$15.00



Please call OHG Wellness Services at (256) 922-6699 to schedule your appointment for on-site flu shots.

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