

North Dakota National Guard Workplace Violence Prevention Pre-Incident Indicators

Research of over 200 incidents of workplace violence revealed that in each case, the suspect exhibited multiple pre-incident indicators that included the following symptoms:

- Increased use of alcohol, prescription, and/or illegal drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Depression and withdrawal
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Threatens or verbally abuses co-workers and supervisors
- Repeated comments that indicate suicidal tendencies
- Frequent, vague physical complaints
- Noticeably unstable emotional responses
- Behavior which is suspect of paranoia
- Preoccupation with previous incidents of violence
- Increased mood swings
- Has a plan to “solve all problems”
- Resistance and over-reaction to changes in procedures
- Increase of unsolicited comments about firearms and/or other dangerous weapons
- Empathy with individuals committing violence
- Repeated violations of company policies
- Fascination with violent and/or sexually explicit movies and/or publications
- Escalation of domestic problems
- Large withdrawals from and/or closing his or her accounts

During post-incident investigations, employees and co-workers in each case stated that they observed one or more of these symptoms but considered them insignificant or just “weird” behavior. Unfortunately, these employees had not been briefed in symptom recognition of potentially violent behavior, nor given instructions on how to report such information.

Some employees may feel that bringing odd behavior to the attention of their manager or supervisor constitutes a form of “ratting” or informing on their co-workers. The reality is that reporting such potentially dangerous behavior is in the best interest of all, including the offender. Only if management is aware can appropriate actions be taken to prevent workplace violence.

Information taken from “Preventing Violence in the Workplace” by Jurg W. Mattman, CPP