

BEFORE IT ESCALATES:

A practical approach to workplace violence prevention

Spotting risk before it becomes a crisis

Texas Mutual Insurance Company | Safety Services

Online • 10-11 a.m. CT

TexasMutual[®]
WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

Agenda

- 1** Welcome & introductions
- 2** WPV trends & the Texas reality
- 3** Reading the environment: CPTED
- 4** High-risk scenarios: field, road & lone workers
- 5** De-escalation & behavioral awareness
- 6** Live audience Q&A
- 7** Closing & resources

Workplace violence is a spectrum

It's not just an active shooter problem. Most incidents fall well below that level but still cause real harm.



Verbal threats



Harassment



Physical assault



Active threats

Severity increases left to right — prevention works best applied across the whole spectrum, not just at the extreme end.

The Texas reality, in our own claims data

Texas Mutual analyzed 10 years of workplace violence claims across our policyholder base. Here is what stood out.

509

workplace violence claims
over the past 10 years

2024

was a decade-high year
for WPV claims

93%

of events were
physical assault

10x

Healthcare workers
are 10 times more
likely to be victims

74%

of assaults involve
patients, students,
or persons in
one's charge

3x

Women are almost 3
times more likely to be
assaulted on the job
than men

20-34

Workers this age are
disproportionately
affected, reflecting
frontline and
high-contact roles

Source: Texas Mutual Insurance Company claims data analysis, June 2026

Four types of workplace violence



Criminal intent

A stranger with no legitimate business on-site



Customer / client / patient

Violence from someone the business serves



Co-worker

Current or former employee — most preventable, most ignored



Personal relationship

Domestic violence spilling into the workplace



POLL

Which type of workplace violence is your blind spot?

Not necessarily the one you're most worried about, but the one you think you're least prepared for.

TYPE
I

TYPE
II

TYPE
III

TYPE
IV

READING THE ENVIRONMENT

CPTED & Physical Risk Reduction

Gene Hernandez | Safety Consultant, Austin Region | Former Law Enforcement

Three CPTED principles

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: a law enforcement framework that reduces criminal opportunity through the design of physical space.



Natural Surveillance

Can people see and be seen?
Sightlines, lighting, window placement, camera coverage.



Natural Access Control

Do entry and exit points guide legitimate traffic and deter unauthorized access?
Fencing, signage, single-point entry, badge access.



Territorial Reinforcement

Does your space communicate ownership and that it is monitored? Signage, landscaping, visible security presence.

Now walk your own site

Take a minute and answer these three questions for your own place of business — not in theory, but for the building you park at tomorrow morning.



Natural Surveillance

Where at your site can a person stand without being seen? Think blind corners, dim parking areas, back entrances no one watches.



Natural Access Control

Who could walk in right now without being challenged? Count the doors left unlocked or unbadged during business hours.



Territorial Reinforcement

Does your space look cared for and monitored? Look at faded signage, overgrown landscaping, an unstaffed front desk.

Then pick one: name a single gap you can start fixing in the next 30 days.

What to look for in a vulnerability assessment



Parking lots

Lighting, blind spots, proximity to building entrance



Entry points

Who can walk in unchallenged? Is there a reception buffer?



High-risk rooms

Where do terminations happen?
Where is cash or valuables handled?



Remote areas

Break rooms, stairwells, loading docks

Fatal funnel

Corridors, stairwells, and narrow spaces where employees are exposed with no options.

Signage as deterrent

*"This is a Zero Harm facility."
Visible policies set expectations for visitors before they act.*

Low-cost wins: lighting, trimmed landscaping, secured secondary entries, panic buttons.

HIGH-RISK SCENARIOS

Remote Jobsites, Road Workers & Lone Employees

Holly | Texas Mutual Safety Services

Field work changes the risk picture

The standard office-based WPV playbook does not fully apply once employees leave a fixed location.

Who is at elevated risk

- Utility crews, construction workers, delivery drivers
- Service technicians, inspectors, adjusters
- Anyone working alone, after hours, or in high-crime areas
- Anyone entering private property, residential or commercial

Remote jobsite risks

- Confrontations with trespassers, property owners, or the public
- Limited ability to call for help: poor coverage, no nearby colleagues
- Road rage escalating when vehicles are marked or identifiable
- Theft-motivated confrontations at equipment-heavy sites

Practical preparation employers should require



Pre-job site assessment

Look up the location, check known hazards, plan exit routes.



Check-in protocols

Employees working alone need a scheduled check-in system. Define what happens on a missed check-in.



Two-person rule

Applied to high-risk locations or situations.



Vehicle safety

Don't leave keys, don't block yourself in, know your surroundings before you exit.

Trust the gut check

The instinct that something is wrong has a neurological basis. It is data, not paranoia.

Pre-attack indicators

- Hands in pockets
- Target glancing
- Pacing
- Agitation

De-escalate before entering a situation, not during it.

When confronted

- Don't argue over equipment or tools. Property is replaceable.
- Create distance, create options, don't get cornered.
- Know your policy: when do you call 911 vs. handle it yourself?
- Have a code word or signal for "I feel unsafe" with your team.

WORKING TOGETHER

De-escalation & Behavioral Awareness for Frontline Safety

Holly & Gene Hernandez

Most incidents don't come out of nowhere

Warning signs exist. The goal is catching leakage behavior before it becomes something worse.

Leakage behavior

- Threatening statements, even indirect ones
- Withdrawal, agitation, fixation on grievances
- Obsessive complaints
- Venting frustration vs. expressing intent: know the difference

Pre-attack indicators

From law enforcement experience:

- Non-verbal: target glancing, hands hidden, pacing, thousand-yard stare
- Verbal: unusually calm after conflict, final statements, goodbye behavior

"See something, say something" only works with a real reporting path, not just a poster.

De-escalate yourself first

You cannot de-escalate someone else if you are activated.



Box breathing

Inhale — 4 counts

Hold — 4 counts

Exhale — 4 counts

Hold — 4 counts

Recognize when your own stress response is affecting your judgment.



De-escalating others

- Soothe before you solve — do not fix the problem while emotions run high
- Active listening: paraphrasing, emotional labeling, open-ended questions
- Avoid escalating language: "Calm down," "Come here," "That's not my problem"
- Give people options and space — cornered people escalate

GENE



KNOW THE LINE

When de-escalation is not appropriate

If someone has crossed into active threat behavior, de-escalation is over.

Get out

Barricade

Act

Know the line between a difficult conversation and an unsafe situation.

Four questions for your own organization

Think honestly about where your organization stands.

POLICY

Does your organization have a real, written workplace violence policy — or an unspoken assumption that it won't happen here?

REPORTING

If an employee saw a genuine warning sign today, would they know who to tell — and would they actually tell them?

SITE RISK

Think of your highest-risk location or role. Would it pass a CPTED walkthrough tomorrow?

LONE WORKERS

Do your field and lone workers have a documented check-in protocol — or an informal one that depends on someone remembering?

Pick the one you feel least prepared for — that is where you start next Monday.

Live Audience Q&A

You have a starting point

Workplace violence is preventable. Stay safe out there.

Resources

- [OSHA Workplace Violence Prevention Guidelines](#)
- [Oregon WPV Toolkit](#)
- CPTED self-assessment checklist
- [NIOSH Workplace Violence Prevention resources](#)
- Texas Mutual Safety Resource Library
- Webinar recording



Free on-site safety consultation — a real policyholder benefit. Ask your consultant today.