

Workplace Violence Prevention Policy Questions & Answers

1. Who is responsible for enforcement of this policy? For example, if a supervisor receives a report of a weapon spotted in another employee's backpack, what steps will be taken?

Answer: A report of a weapon present anywhere on Observatory property that is not permitted by this policy should be brought to management's attention immediately. Management, meaning any combination of personnel comprising line management, HR, and ES&S will determine next steps according to protocols determined by the ES&S Department.
2. Does the policy assume or expect management to perform spot checks and random inspections?

Answer: Management is expected to observe the work environment for safety hazards, including weapons as outlined by this policy. It is the responsibility of management and all employees to adhere to the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, be aware of their surroundings and report any incidents of violation of the policy.
3. How may management conduct a search of an individual's person and/or personal property?

Answer: When management has a reasonable suspicion of a weapon, it may, in consultation with HR/ES&S, ask an employee to provide evidence that the employee is not carrying or in possession of a weapon. This could result in a request for an employee to turn out their pockets, pull up their pant legs, or similar checks. Additionally, with reasonable cause, management may request that an employee open his or her briefcase or purse to provide assurance that there is no violation of this policy. Any search must be in the interest of keeping the workplace free from violence in the workplace and unauthorized weapons as described by this policy.
4. Can my manager conduct a search without consulting HR/ES&S?

Answer: It is advisable for management to consult with HR/ES&S prior to conducting any search for weapons.
5. What are an employee's rights to refuse a search and what does management do if the person refuses the inspection?

Answer: While employees may not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in their work effects, such as computers, desks, and lockers, employees generally have a reasonable expectation of privacy in their personal items, such as purses, briefcases, and backpacks. If an individual refuses to cooperate, management may require that the employee remove the personal article from the property by securing it in their personal vehicle. Alternatively, management may request that the employee leave the property and/or contact civil authorities if necessary to promote the safety of the workplace. Any search under this policy and as described in Q3 above must be the interest of keeping the workplace free from violence in the workplace and unauthorized weapons. Additionally, discipline may be appropriate as discussed below.
6. Can (should) someone be disciplined for refusing to have his or her person or personal items inspected?

Answer: If an employee refuses to assure management, as described in Q3, that they are not, upon reasonable suspicion, in possession of a weapon and further refuses to remove their

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personal property and secure it in their personal vehicle then the employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. The level of discipline is always evaluated based upon the severity of the infraction. In this instance, management should inform an employee that if they fail to cooperate they may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

7. What would be the appropriate disciplinary action?

Answer: The appropriate level of discipline is evaluated with each situation.

8. What if a report of the possession of a weapon is false or was made in an attempt to harass another employee?

Answer: Employees are encouraged to report weapons possession in violation of the policy. Management will investigate all reports of violations of this policy. If the investigative findings conclude that the reporting employee made a bad-faith false report, they employee may be subject to discipline up to and including discharge. Bad-faith under this policy means the report was retaliatory or a harassing in nature, or was made to intentionally discredit or harm another employee. If it is determined, that someone has provided a bad-faith false report they will be in violation of the Workplace Conduct policy.

9. The policy references identifying signs of potentially dangerous persons in the Risk Reduction Measures section. What will be expected of me, as an employee, in this situation?

Answer: Any employee observing another person in the workplace displaying overt signs of extreme stress, resentment, hostility or anger; or any irrational, inappropriate or threatening behavior should promptly notify Human Resources so that management can determine next steps.

10. This policy covers Workplace Violence Prevention at work; we cannot regulate off-work activity, correct?

Answer: The Workplace Violence Prevention policy regulates work activity in the workplace and away from the workplace while the employee is conducting business on behalf of the organization, i.e. while representing the organization away from the workplace, while on business travel, while driving a company vehicle, etc.

11. Given the length of knife blades and the long list of types of weapons listed as prevented in the workplace, how is this going to be enforced?

Answer: We expect that all employees will read and understand the policy and self-manage their own behavior. In the event that does not occur management will be prepared to take steps to ensure the work environment is safe for all employees per the policy.

12. How will we know if someone is discussing illegal or threatening use of weapons and/or bringing weapons into the workplace?

Answer: We will only know if management observes such behavior or someone reports it to us.

13. What should an employee do if facing a member of the public in possession of a weapon?

Answer: It is best to discreetly notify a member of management if you have observed a member of the public in possession of a weapon. If faced with a threat, contact 911.

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14. What is the best approach for management to use when an employee is suspected of possessing a weapon in the workplace?

Answer: Contact HR/ES&S and discuss next steps.

15. What is the extent of the “review of candidates” background to reduce the risk of hiring employees with a history of violent behavior?

Answer: While we do not do formal criminal background checks or broad pre-employment drug testing, HR makes every attempt to review and check that what an employee states as his or her background on the resume is accurate, such as confirming employment dates, reference checking, confirming college degrees, etc. Some positions require additional checking, i.e. confirming driver’s licenses, CDL, etc.

16. What is meant by “employee at risk” and what will the organization do to assist in this situation?

Answer: Periodically, we have had employees who have circumstances outside of work that have the potential to spill over into the workplace if reasonable and proper precautions are not taken. An example of an employee at risk is someone with a protection order/restraining order prohibiting or restricting another person from harassing, threatening, and sometimes even contacting or approaching them. This type of order is issued most commonly in cases of domestic violence. In these situations, the employee generally makes it known to their employer. HR, ESS and management work together to ensure all possible precautions are taken to ensure the employees safety while at work. Another example of an employee at risk may be those employees who handle cash in public access areas. The organization will ensure employees in this work situation receive instructions on how to respond to situations of robbery.

17. Who must receive training and what will be included in the training?

Answer: It is anticipated that awareness level training will be offered to all employees annually. The goal is to ensure that employees are aware of the Observatory policy and the roles and responsibilities of each person affected by this policy. Additionally, managers and supervisors will be offered training to identify potentially violent situations and ensure they are trained in proper response to a potentially violent situation. Lastly, some individuals may, in the course of their job, encounter hostile or potentially violent individuals including situations while working with members of the public. It is important that such employees know the Observatory expectations and be able to exercise good judgement to keep from personal harm.