

# **VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

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to  
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## You and the Workplace Safety Issue

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## The Many Safety Issues

- Personal safety
- Confronting angry persons
- Crisis responses
- Bomb threats
- Facility security
- Phone conflicts
- Encountering protesters
- Natural disasters

## Focus Will Be On These

- Preventing workplace violence
- Handling angry people

## Objectives

- Develop Awareness
- Identify Potential Problems
- Identify Preventive Actions

## Questions We'll Try to Answer

- Is there really a problem?
- Who will do it?
- What provokes it?
- Can law enforcement help prevent it?

## Past Informative Studies

- National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- National Safe Workplace Institute
- Northwestern National Life Ins Co.
- US Center for Disease Control
- U of Louisville School of Medicine
- Dr Pam Collins, Eastern Ky University

## Is There Really a Problem

### General Comment

Homicides are down (no epidemic)

Other Incidents are up

## Who Will Do It?

- Angry, upset, frustrated, disgruntled employee, ex-employee or customer (example: Joseph Wesbecker)
- Mentally Ill
- Those with Domestic Problems

## What Provokes Incidents?

- Usually perpetrator feels there is no other recourse left to them.
- Grievance can be real or imaginary

## What is the Role of Law Enforcement

- Reactive - responding to incidents
- Proactive - crime prevention related activity
  - training
  - liaison with community

## Predicting Violent Behavior

- Can it be done?
- There is no litmus test
- What the experts say
- Who is best at predicting violent behavior?

## Revenge Takes Many Forms

- Death or other physical harm
- Threats (direct or indirect)
- Theft (property or information)
- Property destruction or vandalism
- Computer tampering or misuse
- Product tampering
- Rumor spreading
- Harassment, intimidation, stalking

## Lessons Learned

- Safe workplace responsibility
  - employer
  - employee
- Law suits come from
  - negligent activity (i.e. hiring, retention, supervision, training)
  - no activity
- Don't ignore any threat
- Have a plan

## Warning Signs of Classic Problem Disgruntled Employee

- Loner
- History of violence, intimidation, harassment, etc.
- Unusual fascination with weapons
- Places blame elsewhere
- Lack of social support at home & work
- Uncooperative with management
- Complainer

## Warning Signs (continued)

- Unusual talk about past incidents
- Not enjoyable to be around
- Frequently files complaints, anti-management
- Described as "Time bomb ready to go off"
- Substance abuse history (drug or alcohol)
- Unhappy childhood

Sound like someone you know ?

## Understanding the Warning Signs



## Suggestions for Handling Potential Problem Employees

- Report
- Observe - monitor without discriminating (always a good management practice)
- Respond - react - intervene - confront
- Document
- Follow up
- Consider counseling (a major resource for problem personnel)

## Major Considerations for Prevention of Incidents

- Primary concern is ALWAYS personal safety
- Don't ignore any threat - Do something
- Review all existing policy & procedures & adjust accordingly
- Develop & train response teams
- Make use of counseling services

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**Major Prevention Considerations  
(continued)**

- Listen to your employees
- Remember: There are no guarantees
- Incidents can happen anywhere, no one or no place is immune to incidents

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**Common Questions From  
Community For Law  
Enforcement**

- What general support will law enforcement provide?
- Restraining orders
- Weapons laws
- Records checks on problem people
- Handling of threats, what is a threat?
- Stalking laws
- School safety issues

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**Discuss Examples of Various  
Incidents**

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**Discussion of the Interview of  
The Potentially Dangerous  
Employee**

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**Preventive Policies and  
Procedures for Businesses  
(make them clear to all)**

- Zero tolerance, non-harassment
- Weapons
- Substance abuse
- Searches
- Hiring
- Terminations
- Access control to & from facilities

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**Other Issues to Discuss with  
Community**

- Searches
- Substance abuse awareness and laws
- Collection of evidence
- Crime scene protection
- Sharing of information
- Developing policy and procedures
- Creating a crisis response team

## Crisis Response Team Members

- Developing strategy: security, human resource, legal, law enforcement, medical, upper management, union rep (?),
- Response team: Security, law enforcement(?) and ?????

## SUMMARY

- 1st Concern is always personal safety
- Don't ignore any threat
- Have a plan
- Review & develop effective policy/procedures
- Encourage proactive measures
- Understand results of negligence
- No place is immune
- ONE MORE SLIDE !

## Handling Angry Persons

- Anger, frustration, stress are normal feelings
- Acceptable vs unacceptable responses
- Change your behavior so you are in control, not them !
- Strive for win - win outcome
- Read body language, voice tone, etc. (i.e. non-verbal communication)
- Always think about personal safety !

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management



# Dealing with Workplace Violence

a Guide for Agency Planners

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## Development of Written Policy Statement

### Advantages of Written Policies

Once a workplace violence program is ready to be implemented, agencies must decide whether to issue a written policy statement. Among the advantages of issuing a statement are:

- It informs employees that the violence policy covers intimidation, harassment, and other inappropriate behavior that threatens or frightens them;
- It encourages employees to report incidents;
- It informs employees whom to call; and
- It demonstrates senior management's commitment to dealing with reported incidents.

Agency programs can also be implemented without a written policy statement. In these agencies, employees are often given information about the program (especially whom to call) in training sessions, on posters, in newsletter articles, or by other similar methods.

Note: Agencies have an inherent right to take action against employees who engage in disruptive or threatening behavior whether or not they have issued a written policy statement.

### Policy Statement Contents

A workplace violence policy statement should convey that:

- All employees are responsible for maintaining a safe work environment;
- The policy covers not only acts of physical violence, but harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior;
- The policy covers incidents involving coworkers and incidents involving individuals from outside the agency perpetrating violence against agency employees;
- The agency will respond appropriately to all reported incidents;

- The agency will act to stop inappropriate behavior; and
- Supervisors and all of the offices involved in responding to incidents will be supported by agency management in their efforts to deal with violent and potentially violent situations.

## Recommended Approaches

Consider the following recommendations in developing your written policy statement:

### *Keep it brief*

**A written policy statement should be brief and simple.** Implementation details can be provided in training and in more detailed backup documents. For example, roles and responsibilities of the various offices involved in responding to potentially dangerous situations can be outlined in memoranda of understanding or in operating manuals/instructions rather than in the written policy statement that is issued to all agency employees. This approach gives agency staff the flexibility they will need to deal creatively with these fluid, unpredictable situations.

### *Consider the disadvantages of using definitions*

**There are disadvantages to using definitions of terms such as violence, threats, and harassment in your written policy statement.** Definitions can discourage employees from reporting incidents that they do not believe fall within the definition. The reporting system should not deter employees from reporting situations that frighten them. An employee knows a threat or intimidation or other disruptive behavior when he or she experiences it -- definitions are not necessary. If you want to clarify the scope of your organization's concept of one or more of the terms in the policy, you could use examples. For example, you may want to give examples of verbal and non-verbal intimidating behavior.

Another consideration is that definitions are often restrictive and may create legal problems in the future when you are taking disciplinary actions against the perpetrators of workplace violence. Use of definitions can make it more difficult to defend a case on appeal.

### *Be cautious with "Zero Tolerance"*

**Consider that there could be negative consequences from using the term "zero tolerance."** It could create legal problems in the future when you are taking disciplinary actions against the perpetrators of workplace violence. Use of the term could make it more difficult to defend a case on appeal because a third party could conclude, however mistakenly and inappropriately, that the agency has not considered a penalty appropriate for the particular offense.

There are other possible consequences. The term "zero tolerance" might appear to eliminate any flexibility an agency has in dealing with difficult situations even if this is not intended. Another undesirable side effect is that the appearance of inflexibility can discourage employees from reporting incidents because they do not want to get their coworker fired -- they just want the behavior stopped. This appearance of inflexibility also may discourage early intervention in potentially violent situations.

The sample policy on the next page contains language that is similar to "zero tolerance"



but takes care of the previously mentioned concerns. It says the agency will not tolerate violent or disruptive behavior and then clarifies what that means by saying "that is, all reports of incidents will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately."

*Consult with Legal Counsel*

**Consult your Office of General Counsel for the legal implications of your draft policy.**

Agencies that wish to issue a written policy statement can use the following sample, changing the format and tone as appropriate, and adapting it for their own situations.

## Sample Written Policy Statement

MEMORANDUM FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY HEAD

SUBJECT: Workplace Violence

It is the *[insert Department or Agency name]*'s policy to promote a safe environment for its employees. The Department is committed to working with its employees to maintain a work environment free from violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior. While this kind of conduct is not pervasive at our agency, no agency is immune. Every agency will be affected by disruptive behavior at one time or another.

Violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior in our workplace will not be tolerated; that is, all reports of incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately. Such behavior can include oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm. Individuals who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and may be subject to disciplinary action, criminal penalties, or both.

We need your cooperation to implement this policy effectively and maintain a safe working environment. Do not ignore violent, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or other disruptive behavior. If you observe or experience such behavior by anyone on agency premises, whether he or she is an agency employee or not, report it immediately to a supervisor or manager. Supervisors and managers who receive such reports should seek advice from the Employee Relations Office at xxx-xxxx regarding investigating the incident and initiating appropriate action. **[PLEASE NOTE: Threats or assaults that require immediate attention by security or police should be reported first to security at xxx-xxxx or to police at 911.]**

I will support all efforts made by supervisors and agency specialists in dealing with violent, threatening, harassing, intimidating or other disruptive behavior in our workplace and will monitor whether this policy is being implemented effectively. If you have any questions about this policy statement, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at xxx-xxxx.

# **Preventing Workplace Violence**

*A Condensed Reading by J. Branch Walton*

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Workplace violence can happen anywhere. Don't listen to anyone who says "It can't happen here." No one person or location is immune to incidents of violence. The results of incidents can be not only death, but also injuries, profit loss, property damage and long lasting emotional scarring.

If you want to get the attention of management, show them the amount of financial losses that have been suffered by companies who were sued for negligent hiring, negligent retention and negligent training. Never ignore a threat, have a plan for responding to incidents, and place emphasis on prevention.

Can anyone consistently and accurately predict violent behavior by disgruntled employees, customers or other associates? NO! But employers cannot afford to ignore their responsibilities in recognizing and responding to potentially violent acts by disgruntled persons.

Workplace violence is an unfortunate reality but it is also a rare occurrence. Disgruntled persons are more likely to seek revenge in other ways, such as:

- Theft (including theft of information)
- Vandalism
- Threats, harassment or intimidation
- Rumor spreading
- Product tampering
- Computer tampering
- Physical harm
- Sabotage – property destruction



# LOCKMASTERS SECURITY MANAGEMENT™

- **Search policy.** Employers have a right to know who and what is on their property at all times. It is important that you let everyone entering your property know and understand this policy.
  
- **No weapons on property policy.**
  
- **Develop a close liaison with local law enforcement and an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) contractor.** Don't wait until a crisis occurs. Talk to them well ahead of time. Know what to expect from both when an incident occurs.
  
- **Develop a crisis management team and plan.** Meet at least twice per year to discuss hypothetical cases and your responses to them.
  
- **Conduct physical security surveys of your property and establish an effective access control policy.** Don't allow an unobserved free flow of people to enter and depart from your property.
  
- **Develop a standardized exit interview for all those leaving your employment to include those quitting, retiring or dismissed for cause.** Collect all company property, interview for constructive criticism and get a final evaluation of those terminated for cause.

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## **WHEN ENCOUNTERING SOMEONE WHO APPEARS OUT OF CONTROL:**

- Remain calm and observant.
- Listen to them and let them vent their anger verbally (i.e., don't interrupt).
- Talk slowly and clearly.
- Empathize and be supportive.
- Leave yourself an escape path.
- Offer solutions and choices and give them a graceful way out if possible.
- Signal for help - use employer's response guidelines.
- If a gun is involved don't try to take it away - police must be called.

## **SUMMARY**

- Trust your feelings when encountering a possible threat situation.
- Treat everyone the way you would want to be treated in the same situation.
- Don't ignore any threats. Take them all seriously.
- Your primary concern in every situation is personal safety.
- Have a plan.

# Workplace Violence: An Epidemic Or Just Media Hype?

By J. Branch Walton

**H**ave you heard that shootings in the workplace are reaching epidemic proportions? When news of a shooting in the work environment is released, an uproar over the uncontrollable madness in the workplace often results. Cries of, "This increase in workplace shootings must stop!" "What is causing this sudden outbreak of violent acts?" and "Why is anger now causing an epidemic of such violent acts?" are heard throughout the U.S. The majority of security and

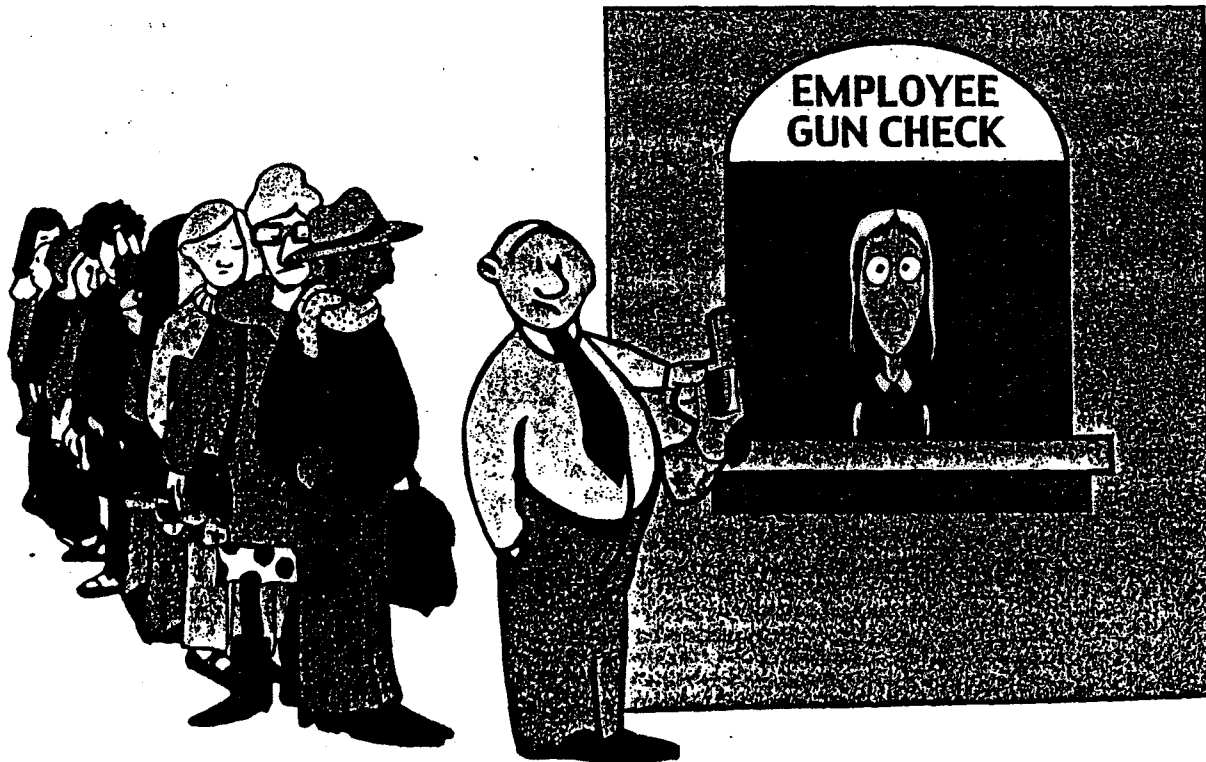
human resource personnel believe these violent acts are reaching epidemic proportions. The facts show otherwise. We are not speaking of incidents such as store robberies and police confrontations where routine street crimes may be the motive, though even these incidents have declined over the past few years. This article concentrates on incidents where there is a connection between the perpetrator, the victim and the work location. Examples of this perpetrator are the disgruntled employee or ex-employee, a dissatisfied customer or an angry domestic

partner.

An epidemic is described as something that is spreading rapidly or affecting great numbers. Here are the total number of homicide victims for the years 1992 through 1997 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- 1992 — 1,044
- 1993 — 1,074
- 1994 — 1,080
- 1995 — 1,036
- 1996 — 912
- 1997 — 887

These figures reflect workplace homicides from all categories. Note



the decline in 1996 and 1997. Robberies and other crimes accounted for 80 percent of these homicides. The victims fitting the workplace connection described above are about 20 percent of the total. Using the 1996 figure of 912 deaths as an example, 20 percent would be about 182 victims. The total decreased to fewer than 900 the following year. This is a relative-

sensationalized by the news media. Is anyone aware that more than 200 children are strangled or nearly strangled each year by window blind cords? Or that several years ago a disgruntled 42-year-old, Midwestern graduate student entered his college classroom, aimed an M-1 carbine rifle at classmates, pulled the trigger and it misfired? There were 23 potential homicide victims in that

target at their place of employment may do so no matter what that place may be.

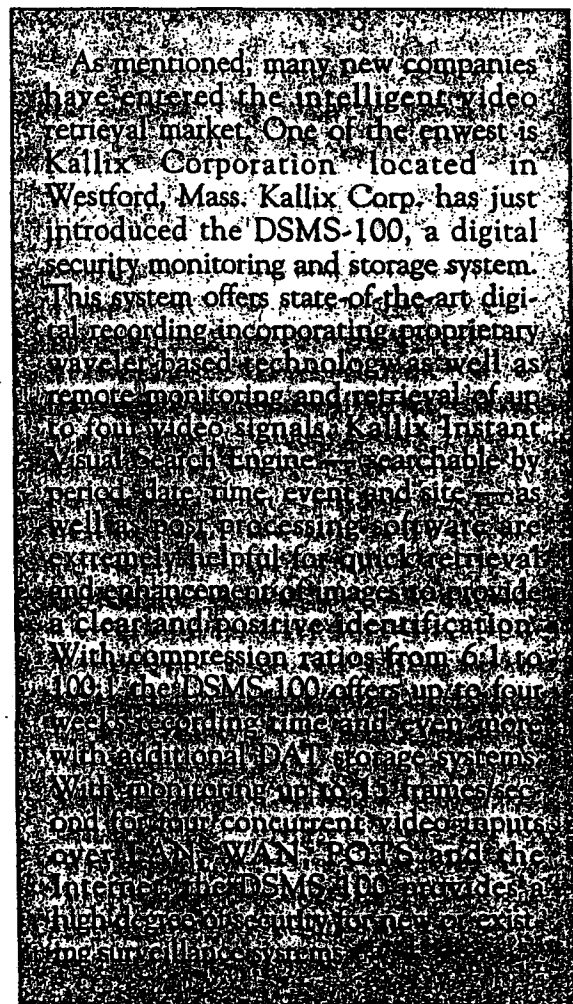
Homicides may not be reaching epidemic proportions but employers and individuals can be severely affected by other acts committed by disgruntled persons. These other acts are the ones that are increasing at an alarming rate.

A security manager's primary concern should be the protection of lives. That responsibility should never be overlooked. The odds are in your favor a shooting won't happen at your workplace, yet you are as vulnerable as any location where it has happened. More than likely that disgruntled employee, ex-employee or customer will seek revenge through other means such as assaults, theft, vandalism, theft of information, computer hacking, threats, rumor spreading or product tampering. It is more likely these acts will be committed by an employee who intentionally and continuously irritates another. These incidents are commonly ignored by supervisors. The victimized employee may be pushed into becoming a perpetrator if complaints are not handled appropriately by management.

Security managers should put their knowledge of workplace violence into the proper perspective. Preventing homicides in the workplace is a responsibility of great importance no matter how few may happen each year; but don't overlook the proper handling of what may appear to be relatively insignificant incidents. Employees have a right to be in a work environment free from threats, harassment or intimidation.

Don't ignore any threat. Review your prevention policies and procedures. Enforce that policy equally and fairly. Document violations. Have a plan. **STND**

*J. Branch Walton is a security consultant and adjunct university professor. He is a former security director and retired Secret Service agent.*



ly small number compared to all other categories of avoidable death in this country, and the numbers appear to be decreasing. Is this really an epidemic? More people die each year by choking on food and by heart attack from shoveling snow, yet we don't see these headlines in the news.

The "epidemic" descriptor is magnified by the attention given it by the press. Workplace homicides are

As mentioned, many new companies have entered the intelligent video retrieval market. One of the newest is Kallix Corporation located in Westford, Mass. Kallix Corp. has just introduced the DSMS-100, a digital security monitoring and storage system. This system offers state-of-the-art digital recording incorporating proprietary wavelet-based technology as well as remote monitoring and retrieval of up to four video signals. Kallix Instant Visual Search Engine—searchable by period, date, time, event and site—as well as post-processing software are extremely helpful for quick retrieval and enhancement of images to provide a clear and positive identification. With compression ratios from 6:1 to 100:1, the DSMS-100 offers up to four weeks recording time and even more with additional DART storage systems. With monitoring up to 15 frames per second for four concurrent video inputs over LAN, WAN, PoS and the Internet, the DSMS-100 provides a high degree of security for the existing surveillance system.

When all the numbers are put into perspective, the odds of such a violent incident occurring at your workplace are relatively low. That's the good news. However, no employer or security manager should let this information lull them into complacency. Avoid the classic "It can't happen here" syndrome. All employers must understand that even one homicide is too many,

especially if that incident occurs on your property. Another major factor to remember is that no place of employment is immune to an incident of violence. It does not matter where you work, how large and secure your facility is, how many employees you have or the type of workplace. You are as vulnerable as anyone. A disgruntled husband, ex-husband, boyfriend or other domestic partner attempting to hurt their

## **Sample Workplace Drug Abuse Policy Statement**

(Company Name) is committed to providing a safe work environment and to fostering the well-being and health of its employees. That commitment is jeopardized when any (Company Name) employee illegally uses drugs on the job, comes to work under their influence, or possesses, distributes or sells drugs in the workplace. Therefore, (Company Name) has established the following policy:

- (1) It is a violation of company policy for any employee to possess, sell, trade, or offer for sale illegal drugs or otherwise engage in the illegal use of drugs on the job.
- (2) It is a violation of company policy for anyone to report to work under the influence of illegal drugs.
- (3) It is a violation of company policy for anyone to use prescription drugs illegally. (However, nothing in this policy precludes the appropriate use of legally prescribed medications.)
- (4) Violations of this policy are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

It is the responsibility of the company's supervisors to counsel employees whenever they see changes in performance or behavior that suggest an employee has a drug problem. Although it is not the supervisor's job to diagnose personal problems, the supervisor should encourage such employees to seek help and advise them about available resources for getting help. Everyone shares responsibility for maintaining a safe work environment and coworkers should encourage anyone who may have a drug problem to seek help.

The goal of this policy is to balance our respect for individuals with the need to maintain a safe, productive and drug-free environment. The intent of this policy is to offer a helping hand to those who need it, while sending a clear message that the illegal use of drugs is incompatible with employment at (Company Name).

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If your company is subject to the requirements of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 (because of a federal government grant or contract), you should add the following statement to your drug policy:

As a condition of employment, employees must abide by the terms of this policy and must notify (Company Name) in writing of any conviction of a violation of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace no later than five calendar days after such conviction.

*(Taken with permission from the President's Drug Advisory Council.)*



## **Biography of J. Branch Walton**

Branch Walton has an extensive background in law enforcement and adult education. He is currently a security trainer and consultant. He is a nationally known speaker on the topic of workplace violence prevention. He specializes in several other crime prevention topics as well.

After receiving his undergraduate degree, Mr. Walton joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a commissioned officer. After a brief period as an investigator for an insurance company, he became a civilian criminal investigator for the Office of Naval Intelligence (now Naval Criminal Investigative Service). Subsequently he joined the U.S. Secret Service where he retired after a 21-year career. His USSS assignments included Special Agent in Charge of Springfield, IL. Field office; Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Office of Training; Senior Instructor - Office of Training; Presidents Carter and Nixon and Candidate Reagan Details, and the Omaha and Kansas City field offices. He also served briefly as a Program Specialist for the LECC program of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Springfield, Illinois conducting training needs analysis, content development and program administration for the law enforcement community.

Mr. Walton was the Director of Corporate Security for Cummins Engine Co., Inc. in Columbus, In. where he was responsible for world wide security operations. He has 14 years of consulting in security and law enforcement topics. He has made over 900 presentations to a wide variety of audiences. His thirty-five years of practical experience in the areas of workplace violence prevention, executive protection, personal safety and general investigations and crime prevention have made him a popular speaker on these topics. While at Cummins Engine Company and FLETC he was a member of their workplace violence response teams.

He served as the Chief of the Management Institute and Branch Chief of the Security Specialties Division at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), Glynco, Ga.. He has been an adjunct faculty member of the criminal justice departments at 4 universities, most recently, Indiana University at Bloomington, In..

He served as the National Director of Training for ASET Corporation and Lockmasters, Inc., security firms headquartered in Dayton, Ohio and Nicholasville, Ky. respectively.

He has authored numerous magazine articles, book chapters and a textbook and has consulted on several video training tapes. Mr. Walton earned a Masters Degree in Administration of Criminal Justice and worked on a doctoral degree in adult education. He is a current or past member of numerous professional associations of the security, law enforcement and crime prevention areas. He has also served on curriculum advisory committees for the criminal justice departments of several universities and on various funded committees studying criminal justice topics.