



K Calder & Associates

Empty Threats... or Early Warning?

An act of significant workplace violence is rarely a spontaneous incident resulting from an aggressor “snapping”. In reality, these incidents are regularly precipitated by a series of often-identifiable behaviors or ‘indicators’, which the aggressor moves through prior to carrying out an act of violence.

While each individual of concern and situation is unique, the indicators listed below are often associated with or have preceded acts of “targeted violence” in the workplace. The context and circumstance of each case must be considered when assessing the risk of violence an individual may pose. Individuals may present one or more of the indicators and in isolation this does not indicate that the risk of violence exists.

This list of indicators will assist with identifying individuals of concern and provides support for deciding when and how to complete a more thorough threat assessment. This approach minimizes the risk of over- or under-reacting to a perceived threat of violence.

1. Verbal or written threats to injure or kill others, including co-workers. Targets may be specific or general.
2. History of previous violence associated with a pattern of aggressive and intimidating behaviors and interpersonal conflicts
3. References or identifies with workplace or other significant acts of violence.
4. Antagonistic, accusatory, and/or threatening behaviors associated to disputes with employer or co-workers. Holds ongoing grudge and seem overly sensitive to associated issues.
5. Frequent angry outbursts. In particular, if the individual is not remorseful and/or does not appreciate the impact their actions have on others.
6. Paranoid or unrealistic concerns of being persecuted.
7. Depression or mood swings, especially associated with violent or threatening comments or acts.
8. Increasing alcohol or substance abuse.
9. Increasing personal or professional stressors and escalation of related inappropriate or threatening behaviors and/or ideation.
10. Impending personal or professional loss, including loss of job, opportunity, or personal relationship.

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Practical Threat Management Solutions