

## RISK SERVICES

# EMPLOYEE SAFETY UPDATE

## Workplace violence prevention and response: Public environment

*Workplace violence involves any physical assault, threatening behavior or verbal abuse that happens in the workplace. The incident can take place in any location where you are working, including the facility and parking lot.*



Some examples of workplace violence include:

- Verbal threats
- Aggressive behavior, like pushing or shoving
- Abusive or offensive language or gestures or other discourteous conduct
- Disorderly conduct, such as shouting, throwing objects, punching walls and slamming doors
- Making false, malicious or unfounded statements to damage someone's reputation
- Bringing weapons into the workplace

While the individual risk factors will vary, some of the risk factors in the public and food industry include:

- The exchange of cash with the public
- Working alone, especially at night
- Locations that are isolated or in high-crime areas
- Delivering food products
- The sale of alcoholic beverages
- Poorly lit areas and parking lots
- Long waits for customers and overcrowded spaces

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Violent situations in the workplace can escalate if not defused; it's important to recognize the warning signs and respond appropriately. The warning signs that typically occur can be categorized into three levels.

**Level 1**, or early warning signs, involves a person who is:

- Intimidating or bullying
- Discourteous or disrespectful
- Uncooperative
- Verbally abusive

When someone exhibits Level 1 behavior, maintain a calm attitude, acknowledge the person's feelings and avoid acting in a manner that could be interpreted as aggressive—like moving quickly, getting too close or speaking loudly. Always report concerns to your supervisor and seek their help in responding to the situation, if needed.

**Level 2**, or when the situation escalates, involves a person who:

- Argues with customers, vendors, employees and/or management
- Refuses to obey company policies and procedures
- Damages equipment and steals property
- Verbalizes wishes to hurt employees and/or management
- Sends a threatening notes to employees and/or management
- Sees themselves as a victim of management

When someone exhibits Level 2 behavior, call 911 (if warranted), especially if the situation requires immediate medical and/or law enforcement personnel. If necessary, secure your own safety and the safety of others, then contact your supervisor to report the violent behavior.

**Level 3**, or imminent violence, is when the person displays intense anger, resulting in:

- Suicidal threats
- Physical fights
- Destruction of property
- Display of extreme rage
- Utilization of weapons to harm others

When someone exhibits Level 3 behavior, immediately leave the area and call 911. Remain calm, and then contact your supervisor. Cooperate with law enforcement personnel when they respond to the situation.







## NATIONAL PROTECT YOUR HEARING MONTH

Each October, we observe [National Protect Your Hearing Month](#) to raise awareness about noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). Sponsored by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the event encourages people to learn more about NIHL and how to prevent it.

Everyday sounds won't typically damage your hearing. However, people often participate in activities that produce harmful sound levels, such as attending loud sporting events and music concerts and using power tools, which will cause hearing loss over time.

When sounds are too loud for too long, tiny bundles of hair-like structures that sit on top of hair cells in the inner ear are damaged. When hair cells are damaged, they can't respond to sound, causing NIHL. In humans, hair cells can't be fixed or replaced, so the resulting hearing loss is permanent.

There are steps you can take to protect your hearing:

- **Turn down the volume.** Know which noises can cause damage—those at or above 85 decibels (roughly equivalent to the volume of a train passing, police siren, or snow blower). If you use headphones or earbuds, keep the volume low.
- **Move away from the noise.** If you can't lower the volume, put some distance between you and the source.
- **Wear hearing protection,** such as earplugs or earmuffs, when you're involved in a noisy activity, such as mowing the lawn, using power tools, playing loud music, or attending a concert or loud sporting event. If you work in a loud environment, such as a construction site, be sure to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).



# Chemical spotlight

## *Formic acid*

Formic acid is a colorless liquid with a strong, penetrating odor. It's used in dyeing and finishing textiles and paper, in treating leather, and in making many other chemicals.

Formic acid is not compatible with oxidizing agents, strong inorganic bases, strong organic bases, chemically active metals, strong acids and cyanide salts. Store formic acid in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated area. Sources of ignition are prohibited where the chemical is used, handled or stored.

If formic acid is spilled or leaked, avoid breathing vapors, mist or gas, and ensure adequate ventilation. Remove all sources of ignition and evacuate personnel to safe areas. Use personal protective

equipment (PPE), including goggles or safety glasses, gloves, flame-retardant protective clothing and respiratory protection.

Prevent further leakage or spillage if it is safe to do so, and don't let the product enter drains, sewers, underground or confined spaces, groundwater, waterways or discharge into the environment. Absorb liquids in vermiculite, dry sand, earth or similar material, and deposit in sealed containers. Ventilate and wash the area after cleanup is complete. It may be necessary to contain and dispose of formic acid as a hazardous waste.

Contact the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local environmental regulatory agency for specific recommendations.



## SHELTER IN PLACE: HURRICANES AND TORNADOES

When a tornado or hurricane warning is issued, you must seek shelter. Stay calm and await instructions from your emergency coordinator or a designated official.

Shelter locations should have enough room for everyone and, if possible, a hard-wired telephone and access to a bathroom. Ideally, each location will meet one of the following descriptions:

- A small interior room on the lowest floor and without windows;
- A hallway on the lowest floor away from doors and windows; or
- A room constructed with reinforced concrete, brick or blocks without windows.

In the event of a tornado or hurricane, take the following steps:

- Do not use the elevators.
- Go to the shelter location and stay as close to the center of it as possible.
- Keep away from overhead fixtures, filing cabinets and electrical power.
- If possible, get under a table or another sturdy object, and use pillows, blankets or other materials to protect your head and neck.
- Monitor the Internet, local television and radio stations for weather updates and instructions.

If you are advised to shelter in the facility for an extended period of time, your company will gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first-aid supplies, flashlights and batteries. Stay in the shelter until it has been announced that the tornado or the hurricane is over and it is safe to leave the building.

