

Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce 2000
Report of Recommendations

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Report of Recommendations



U. S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service

Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce 2000
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report transmits recommendations for the prevention of workplace violence from the FSIS Workplace Violence Prevention (WPVP) Taskforce.

Taskforce Responsibilities

Tom Billy established the WPVP Taskforce in August 2000. It is composed of approximately 25 Agency employees from headquarters and field locations. The Taskforce was assigned to:

1. Identify possible causes, risks, and contributing factors of workplace violence by, among other things, reviewing the events surrounding violent incidents and threats against FSIS employees.
2. Identify critical aspects of FSIS functions, programs, policies, procedures, and practices that pose risk of violence. Consult with outside expert, as necessary.
3. Identify precautions and implement preventative measures to cover all offices and functions of FSIS.
4. Develop recommendations – short and long term.
5. Develop an implementation/action plan for short- and long-range changes.

Recommendations for Immediate Implementation

The Taskforce agreed on five immediate actions that could be completed within Fiscal Year 2001:

1. **Provide cell phones to employees for personal security**, beginning with compliance officers.
Status: Cell phones have been purchased for all Compliance Officers. Cell phone needs for other FSIS employees will be outlined in FY 2001.
2. **Communicate to industry the Agency's zero tolerance policy** on workplace violence and warn about the consequences of copycat threats, which have occurred since the murders.
Status: The Administrator sent a memo to owners and operators of Federally-inspected plants and FSIS field employees on July 7, 2000. It is included as Attachment A.
3. **Conduct employee interviews to determine extent of incidents and safety and security needs/gaps.**
Status: One subgroup has developed a detailed action plan. (See Attachment B.) Approximately 6 months are needed to complete interviews.
4. **Allocate adequate resources to Inspectors-in-Charge (IICs) to meet with their inspectors and, separately, with plant managers** to discuss preventing workplace violence and to make sure that information is understood.

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Status: The inspection workforce throughout the country will attend 6-10 hour training/meeting sessions, during the final quarter of FY 2001. A portion of the meeting time will be dedicated to workplace violence training/discussions.

5. Ensure that there is adequate police coverage in potentially violent situations.

Status: On August 25, District Enforcement Operations sent all Assistant District Managers for Enforcement a flyer intended to be distributed by Compliance Officers and others during liaison visits to police departments. (The flyer is included as Attachment C.)

Most of the short-term recommendations are in the implementation stage, as indicated above. The Agency is studying whether resources and competing priorities make it feasible to implement the remaining recommendations.

Near-Term and Long-Term Recommendations

The Taskforce recognizes that preventing workplace violence requires concerted and persistent attention and resources. It developed a slate of longer-term recommendations based on its collective experience and expertise and the insights gained from experts who made presentations to the group. However, the Taskforce also concluded that the slate of longer-term recommendations should be reconsidered following employee interviews and/or resource allocations.

◆ ***CHANGE THE CULTURE.***

- Require mandatory reporting of all incidents of violence or threats.
- Address the sometimes adversarial relationship between industry and Agency employees.

◆ ***COLLECT AND ANALYZE INFORMATION/DATA.***

- Collect and analyze information/data from workplace violence incident reports, law enforcement reports, listening sessions, previous surveys, site visits, and interviews.
- Benchmark what others have done to prevent and respond to workplace violence to identify best practices.

◆ ***IDENTIFY SAFETY/SECURITY MEASURES.***

- Identify measures for improving both personal security and worksite security when the analysis described above is completed.
- Perform risk assessment/threat analysis.

◆ ***ESTABLISH/REVISE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.***

- Establish a Workplace Violence Liaison/Intervention Officer at the district level.
- Revise Directive 4735.4 Revision 1, *Reporting Assault, Threats, Intimidation or Interference.*
- Develop policies and procedures to hold supervisors and managers more accountable for communicating, monitoring, and verifying that workplace violence information and reports are appropriately disseminated with proper follow up.
- Establish a “whistle blower” number for employees discouraged/prohibited by supervisors from filing workplace violence reports.
- Review and revise the current criteria for classifying Compliance Officers.

◆ ***PROVIDE TRAINING.***

- Increase employee awareness/education on WPVP issues through presentations and training.

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- Expand the basic, intermediate, and advanced Compliance Officer training courses.
- Provide conflict resolution training.

- ◆ ***COMMUNICATE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND INCIDENTS.***
 - Post the FSIS workplace violence policy on the wall in every office.
 - Set up a public folder as a WPVP resource library.
 - Set up a workplace violence electronic mailbox, hotline or website.
 - Place WPVP notices in the *Beacon* newsletter, on pay stubs, and in press releases.
 - Send and re-send the message that FSIS will not tolerate workplace violence.

- ◆ ***DEVELOP A SYSTEMS APPROACH.***
 - Expand the function of FSIS' Internal Control Staff to allow uniformity in the handling and reporting of workplace violence cases nationwide.
 - Establish or refine delegations of authority to eliminate duplication and add clarity.
 - Identify those responsible for taking action on specific types of workplace violence reports.
 - Hold periodic meetings of those with responsibilities for addressing various types of employee reports to foster better coordination.
 - Create a uniform system for identifying, assessing, and managing the risk of violence to provide immediate access to critical information that will increase the safety of field enforcement and in-distribution personnel.
 - Improve handling of investigations of and responses to threats and actual assaults, working with OIG, which is responsible for follow-up.

- ◆ ***USE CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PENALTIES.***
 - Report workplace threats or other incidents to local law enforcement authorities to allow the victim the opportunity to press charges, as appropriate, against the perpetrator of the workplace violence.
 - Reassess the policy of dealing with violence between FSIS employees as an administrative, rather than a criminal, issue.

- ◆ ***PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE BUDGET.***
 - For recommendations, above, that are accepted, ensure adequate funding for implementation.
 - Establish separate funding within each District for training/implementation.

CURRENT FSIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to the actions carried out as a result of the short-term recommendations discussed previously, the Agency has undertaken the following actions in response to the recommendations of the Taskforce and others:

1. The Agency has emphasized the importance of inspectors meeting every week with plant representatives, and supervisors must schedule periodic meetings with personnel and inspectors to solve problems early.

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2. The Administrator issued 1) an all-employee letter on handling critical workplace violence incidents and 2) a letter to owners and operators of Federally-inspected plants asking that both plant owners and operators and FSIS field personnel redouble their efforts to demonstrate a professional relationship in their daily work.
3. The Agency's Technical Service Center is enhancing the consistent application of rules and scientific principles through a new review and correlation activity.
4. FSIS is piloting new automated inspection scheduling and reporting software (PBIS 5.0) to track plants' appeals of noncompliance reports from the plant level, through field supervisors and district offices, to headquarters. It will expedite both appeals and responses.
5. The Agency continues to conduct "listening sessions" to hear first-hand employees' concerns and to provide WPVP and Civil Rights training in various district and field locations.
6. FSIS filled three new positions to coordinate workplace violence prevention efforts.
7. FSIS has purchased cellular phones and protective clothing, and is providing new identification cards that more clearly identify the enforcement role for compliance personnel.
8. The Agency has provided WPVP videos to most circuit supervisors for viewing at work unit meetings.
9. The Agency has created a plaque to award local police officers who provide assistance in dangerous situations.
10. FSIS has used its internal newsletter, the *Beacon*, to publish information on workplace violence prevention. Wallet cards with WPVP hotline numbers were also included.
11. The Agency has created a memorial website in honor of the compliance officers who lost their lives. (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/topics/memorial.htm>) It also contains links to WPVP information, such as Departmental and Agency notices and policies.
12. The Agency has issued a notice detailing its policy on the presence of firearms in Federally-inspected plants and other places where FSIS employees carry out their responsibilities under the law and regulations.
13. In April, the Agency pilot-tested a special safety training program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. FSIS and DOT's HAZMAT officials developed this program jointly. HAZMAT inspectors, like FSIS Compliance Officers, are not weapons-authorized, but often carry out enforcement activities alone, in isolated locations, where violators may be armed and hostile.

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This report provides the recommendations of the 2000 Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce.

Background

Taskforce Formation. Tom Billy established the WPVP Taskforce in August 2000. It is composed of approximately 25 Agency employees from headquarters and field locations. Mr. Billy's remarks at the initial session provided a framework for ensuing discussions. He discussed environmental factors and how they affect the way Agency employees perform their work. He pointed to the violence in a number of schools recently, the impact of the Oklahoma bombing on security measures in Federal buildings, and the assaults on the then Secretary of Agriculture as examples of the changing environment. He also alluded to the increased tensions as a result of the change in the Agency's regulatory requirements on industry.

Taskforce Responsibilities. The Taskforce was assigned to:

1. Identify possible causes, risks, and contributing factors of workplace violence by, among other things, reviewing the events surrounding violent incidents and threats against FSIS employees.
2. Identify critical aspects of FSIS functions, programs, policies, procedures, and practices that pose risk of violence. Consult with outside experts, as necessary.
3. Identify precautions and implement preventative measures to cover all offices and functions of FSIS.
4. Develop recommendations – short and long term.
5. Develop an implementation/action plan for short- and long-range changes.

Workplace Violence Information. The group was informed of approximately 10 incidents of Agency workplace violence or threats that had occurred within the last year. It was also informed that USDA workplace violence incidents had quadrupled over the last two years. There have been two deaths, four assaults, and four death threats. The Taskforce also reviewed the June 2000 evaluation report on the Agency WPVP Program and reviewed workplace violence measures currently in place. Its assumptions on issues, such as risk analysis, threat assessment and profiling, were guided by advice from experts from the FBI's National Center for Violent Crime and the Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center. To ensure that worksite-specific issues were discussed and addressed, the Taskforce divided into the four following workgroups: Inplant; Laboratory; Urban and Office; and Non-Inplant, Non-Urban. However, the recommendations that follow reflect the feedback of the entire Taskforce.

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Recommendations for Immediate Implementation.

The Taskforce agreed on five immediate actions that could be completed within Fiscal Year 2001:

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Status: Cell phones have been purchased for all Compliance Officers. Cell phone needs for other FSIS employees will be outlined in FY 2001.
2. **Communicate to industry the Agency's zero tolerance policy** on workplace violence and warn about the consequences of copycat threats that have occurred since the murders.
Status: The Administrator sent a letter to owners and operators of Federally-inspected plants and FSIS field employees on July 2, 2000. (See Attachment A)
3. **Conduct employee interviews to determine extent of incidents and safety and security needs/gaps.**
Status: One subgroup has developed a detailed action plan. (See Attachment B) Approximately 6 months are needed to complete interviews.
4. **Allocate adequate resources to Inspectors-in-Charge (IICs) to meet with their inspectors and, separately, with plant managers** to discuss preventing workplace violence and to make sure that information is understood.
Status: The inspection workforce throughout the country will attend 6-10 hour training/meeting sessions, during the final quarter of FY 2001. A portion of the meeting time will be dedicated to workplace violence training/discussions.
5. **Ensure that there is adequate police coverage in potentially violent situations.**
Status: On August 25, District Enforcement Operations sent all Assistant District Managers for Enforcement a flyer intended to be distributed by Compliance Officers and others during liaison visits to police departments. (See Attachment C)

Most of the short-term recommendations have been implemented, as indicated above. The Agency is studying whether resources and competing priorities make it feasible to implement the remaining recommendations.

Near-Term and Long-Term Recommendations

The Taskforce recognizes that preventing workplace violence requires concerted and persistent attention and resources. It developed a slate of longer-term recommendations based on its collective experience and expertise, and the insights gained from experts who made presentations to the group. However, the Taskforce also concluded that the slate of longer-term recommendations should be reconsidered following employee interviews and/or resource allocations.

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◆ ***CHANGE THE CULTURE.***

The FSIS and industry culture should be one in which employees are protected from actual or potential workplace violence as basic human and civil rights. The following characteristics illustrate the desired outcome of cultural change:

- Neither FSIS employees nor industry employees accept threats (allegedly in jest) as “part of the environment”.
- FSIS policies demonstrate that the Agency will not tolerate workplace violence nor threats, intimidation or harassment of employees.
- Employees understand their right to a workplace free of violence, threats, harassment or intimidation.
- Employees understand their responsibility for striving for non-adversarial relationships on the job.
- Employees report violence, threats, intimidation or harassment without fear of reprisal.
- Supervisors and managers support employee reporting of violence, threats, intimidation or harassment.

Recommendations

- Require mandatory reporting of all incidents of workplace violence or threats.
- Address the sometimes adversarial relationship between industry and Agency employees.

◆ ***COLLECT AND ANALYZE INFORMATION/DATA.***

A variety of mechanisms, including listening sessions, focus groups and individual interviews can be used to document, synthesize, and analyze employee feedback. The information will help the Agency identify existing, as well as potential, work situations in which FSIS employees are at risk of workplace violence incidents and identify non-work situations where FSIS employees are at risk due to the nature of their work. Additionally, the information would reveal trends, patterns, and the events that lead to escalation of incidents (e.g., the Agency closing a business); pinpoint the need for security/protective equipment; and identify the best and safest way to address and approach situations without elevating risk.

Recommendations

- Collect and analyze information/data from workplace violence incident reports, law enforcement reports, listening sessions, previous surveys, site visits, and interviews. (See Attachment B)
 - a) Provide resources (funding and staffing) for completing interview/feedback plan.
 - b) Consult with employee organizations and the union in planning the interview process. (Approximately 6 months would be needed for the interview process.)
 - c) Review information to determine, e.g., employee vs. industry violence, employee vs. employee violence, violence of opportunity, rural vs. suburban.
 - d) Analyze reports made to law enforcement and the action(s) taken relating to those incidents, i.e., charges pressed, criminal action taken, Agency disciplinary action, and plant reprimand.
- Benchmark what others have done to prevent and respond to workplace violence to identify best practices. Consider the following sources for review:

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- a) Federal: Agencies known to have experience with incidents of workplace violence, such as the U.S. Postal Service.
- b) Other Federal agencies that compile, maintain, and analyze workplace violence incidents and threats.
- c) Within USDA: The Office of Civil Rights, the Office of Inspector General, and the Office of Human Resources Management to obtain information on workplace violence incidents, which is collective for USDA. Each agency's EEO/Civil Rights Division, Employee Relations/Human Resources office, and Internal Control office to obtain information on reports of workplace violence incidents and remedies and actions that resulted from those incidents.
- d) State: Local (Maryland, Virginia, and District of Columbia) government agencies' Human Services departments (internal affairs/employee misconduct), and security offices to obtain information on what these governments have learned from workplace violence incidents, or to obtain policies they may have in place.
- e) Private Sector: Fortune 500-type companies such as AT&T, IBM, Xerox, General Electric, Ford, Chrysler, Merrill Lynch, Bank of America, etc., to speak with staff from their security and human resources offices regarding workplace violence incidents, prevention, education, and policies for notification or reporting of an incident.
- f) Educational Institutions: Selected institutions, which either focus on studying human behaviors or criminal behaviors to obtain lessons learned from workplace violence incidents.

◆ ***IDENTIFY SAFETY/SECURITY MEASURES.***

Safety and security measures should be reviewed at worksites, and physical security measures should be upgraded, as necessary.

Recommendations

- Perform risk assessment/threat analysis to identify:
 - 1) Environmental risk factors, both common and unique
 - 2) Geographical risk factors
 - 3) Situational risk factors
 - 4) Physical risk factors. E.g., at laboratories, review lighting, video cameras, fences, cardkey access, sign-in procedures, etc.
 - 5) Known risk factors
 - 6) Administrative controls which contribute to risk factors
 - 7) Behavioral risk factors
 - 8) Occupational risk factors (tasks which create or result in risk)
 - 9) Relationship risk factors
 - 10) Precipitating events which create or result in risk factors
 - 11) Safety risk factors
 - 12) Security risk factors
 - 13) Public contact risk factors, e.g., contact with industry, service providers, and other customers

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◆ ***ESTABLISH/REVISE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT THE DESIRED CULTURAL CHANGE.***

There should be a national policy on workplace violence prevention. FSIS managers and supervisors need performance standards that address workplace violence prevention if they are to be held accountable for supporting the Agency's national policy.

Recommendations

- Establish a Workplace Violence Liaison/Intervention Officer at the district level.
- Revise Directive 4735.4, Revision 1, *Reporting Assault, Threats, Intimidation or Interference*, so that it is more user-friendly. Include: 1) a checklist to assist independent reporting; 2) a continuation sheet to provide employees with enough space to document their complaints; and 3) a block on any newly-designed form for employees to indicate successful resolution. Pretest the revised directive with one or more employee focus groups to increase the likelihood that the revised directive is user-friendly.
- Develop a performance element to hold supervisors and managers more accountable for communicating, monitoring, and verifying that workplace violence information and reports are properly disseminated with proper follow-up.
- Establish a “whistle blower” number for employees discouraged/prohibited by their supervisors from filing workplace violence reports. (This could be an expansion of the current OIG hotline or an Agency hotline.)
- Review and revise the current criteria for classifying Compliance Officers. Consider classifying positions to another enforcement occupation that also does not require that employees carry guns and or have arrest powers. Credential and certify all compliance officers and in-distribution inspectors in their respective occupations.

◆ ***PROVIDE TRAINING.***

Mandate training on workplace violence prevention for all Agency employees.

Recommendations

- Increase employee awareness/education on WPVP issues through presentations and training. Use work unit/staff meetings to discuss issues and have participants sign acknowledgement form.
 - a) Train employees to deal with warning signs that a **situation** has the potential for violence.
 - b) Train employees on how to defuse violent situations, minimize adverse effects, and protect themselves.
 - c) Train employees to recognize characteristics of **behavior** that indicate a person is destabilizing and the potential for violence is increasing.
 - d) Train employees on the appropriate procedures to follow once an incident has occurred.
- Expand the basic, intermediate, and advanced Compliance Officer training course.
- Provide conflict resolution training.

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◆ ***COMMUNICATE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND INCIDENTS.***

Recommendations

- Post the FSIS workplace violence policy on the wall in every office.
- Set up a public folder as a WPVP resource library.
- Set up a workplace violence electronic mailbox, hotline, and website. (Place a “link” to the hotline on the front page of the FSIS website – This will reduce the steps necessary to get to the hotline. Also, “audit” the current website resources to reevaluate the location for the links and other information related to workplace violence.)
- Place WPVP notices in the *Beacon* newsletter, on pay stubs, and in press releases.
- Send and re-send (via meetings, speeches, correspondence) the message that FSIS will not tolerate workplace violence and will follow up on all FSIS employee reports of and on all plant employee reports of FSIS violence, threats, intimidation or harassment.

◆ ***DEVELOP A SYSTEMS APPROACH.***

Coordination between program areas must improve in order for workplace violence prevention activities to be effective. Clarifying FSIS roles, responsibilities, and processes for resolving incidents would facilitate the evaluation of the success and/or failure of preventative measures taken. District Enforcement Operations, Labor and Employee Relations Division, Internal Control Staff, Civil Rights Division, and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) are among key units involved.

Recommendations

- Expand the function of FSIS’ Internal Control Staff to allow uniformity in the handling and reporting of workplace violence cases nationwide.
- Establish or refine delegations of authority to eliminate duplication and add clarity. (A delegation of authority must be developed to clarify the role of the national coordinator on workplace violence prevention.)
- Identify those responsible for taking action on specific types of workplace violence reports and outline the paperwork flow for those reports. Identify who should maintain files, who should inform whom, etc.
- Hold periodic meetings of those with responsibilities for addressing various types of employee reports to foster better coordination.
- Create a uniform system for identifying, assessing, and managing the risk of violence to provide immediate access to critical information that will increase the safety of field enforcement and in-distribution personnel.
 - a. Contact the National Crime Information Center, FBI, OIG, Secret Service, state/local law enforcement departments and others to:
 1. Access information on individuals who may have a criminal record or pose a safety risk.
 2. Identify environments hostile to the Agency.
 3. Create partnerships with other law enforcement entities.

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4. Develop a rapid response system for assistance, when required.
 - b. Establish a cadre of credentialed compliance officers with law enforcement authorities who can access data on individuals with criminal records and other relevant information.
 - Improve handling of investigations of and responses to threats and actual assaults with OIG, which is responsible for follow-up.
 - a. Initiate a dialogue with OIG.
 - b. Establish jointly with OIG, measurable objectives for improving interface between the agencies on follow-up of reports of violence, threats, intimidation or harassment.
 - c. Report back to employees on progress annually.
- ◆ ***USE CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PENALTIES.***
- Report workplace threats or other incidents to local law enforcement authorities to allow the victim the opportunity to press charges, as appropriate, against the perpetrator of the workplace violence.
 - Reassess the policy of dealing with violence between FSIS employees as an administrative, rather than a criminal, issue.
- ◆ ***PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE BUDGET.***
- For recommendations, above, that are accepted, ensure adequate funding for implementation.
 - Establish separate funding within each District for training/implementation. The funding would cover both workplace violence prevention and EEO/Civil Rights training/interventions.

CURRENT FSIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to the actions carried out as a result of the short-term recommendations discussed previously, the Agency has undertaken the following actions in response to the recommendations of the Taskforce and others:

1. The Agency has emphasized the importance of inspectors meeting every week with plant representatives, and supervisors must schedule periodic meetings with personnel and inspectors to solve problems early.
2. The Administrator issued 1) an all-employee letter on handling critical workplace violence incidents and 2) a letter to owners and operators of Federally-inspected plants asking that both plant owners and operators and FSIS field personnel redouble their efforts to demonstrate a professional relationship in their daily work.
3. The Agency's Technical Service Center is enhancing the consistent application of rules and scientific principles through a new review and correlation activity.
4. FSIS is piloting new automated inspection scheduling and reporting software (PBIS 5.0) to track plants' appeals of noncompliance reports from the plant level, through field supervisors

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and district offices, to headquarters. It will expedite both appeals and responses. It will expedite both appeals and responses.

5. The Agency continues to conduct “listening sessions” to hear first-hand employees’ concerns and to provide WPVP and Civil Rights training in various district and field locations.
6. FSIS filled three new positions to coordinate workplace violence prevention efforts.
7. FSIS has purchased cellular phones and protective clothing, and is providing new identification cards that more clearly identify the enforcement role for compliance personnel.
8. The Agency has provided WPVP videos to most circuit supervisors for viewing at work unit meetings.
9. The Agency has created a plaque to award local police officers who provide assistance in dangerous situations.
10. FSIS has used its internal newsletter, the *Beacon*, to publish information on workplace violence prevention. Wallet cards with WPVP hotline numbers were also included.
11. The Agency has created a memorial website in honor of the compliance officers who lost their lives. (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/topics/memorial.htm>) It also contains links to WPVP information, such as Departmental and Agency notices and policies.
12. The Agency has issued a notice detailing its policy on the presence of firearms in federally-inspected plants and other places where FSIS employees carry out their responsibilities under the law and regulations.
13. In April, the Agency pilot tested a special safety training program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. FSIS and DOT’s HAZMAT officials developed this program jointly. HAZMAT inspectors, like FSIS Compliance Officers, are not weapons-authorized, but often carry out enforcement activities alone, in isolated locations, where violators may be armed and hostile.

The Agency continues to move forward on those recommendations that can be accomplished within available resources, program authority and structure and to review other recommendations for feasibility in terms of resources and competing priorities.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
And Inspection
Service

Washington, D.C.
20250

Attachment A

July 7, 2000

TO: Owners and Operators of Federally Inspected Plants
FSIS Field Employees
FROM: Thomas J. Billy /s/
Administrator

We are all saddened by the tragic killing of two compliance officers and one state of California investigator at the Santos Linguisa Factory, a sausage processor in San Leandro, California. We must do all we can to help prevent the kind of tragedy that occurred in San Leandro from ever happening again. One step that may help in this goal is for all of us to redouble our efforts to ensure that both plant owners and operators and FSIS field personnel demonstrate a professional relationship in their daily work. Back in July 1988, agency officials and industry representatives developed the following objective In order to improve the working relationship between the industry and the agency.

To improve the professional relationship between inspection and industry personnel at the workplace and resolve differences in a business-like and equitable manner to meet the goals of the inspection program.

With this objective in mind, the agency developed a set of principles to guide and help foster better industry/agency relationships. The principles were communicated to FSIS field personnel and incorporated in various agency training programs. It was anticipated that plant officials and employees would also apply these principles in their daily dealings with each other. Therefore, we ask both Industry and FSIS field personnel to re-visit these principles and to reflect on their business dealings to make sure they exercise the following behavior in their dealings with one another:

1. Maintain open, honest, and straightforward communications.
2. Have mutual respect for one another.
3. Be issue oriented; do not personalize.
4. Maintain a work environment that is absent the fear of retaliation and intimidation.
5. Understand each other's role and responsibilities.

As previously stated, these principles were developed for use by FSIS field personnel. We encourage plant personnel to (1) reflect on what has happened and to personally consider how they may be conducting themselves when dealing with FSIS field personnel, and (2) be even more sensitive to the importance of maintaining a business-like relationship with all FSIS personnel, so as to lessen the possibility that tensions may arise between them.

Though an isolated incident, the San Leandro killings could conceivably affect how FSIS field personnel may view plant officials and employees. This is only natural. We will do our part to bring understanding to FSIS personnel about their relationship to industry but it is important that industry do likewise. We therefore encourage both plant officials and FSIS field personnel to use the procedures already established, as well as the appeals process, to deal with intimidation and retaliation concerns instead of taking matters into their own hands. There are two directives in place for this purpose. They are:

1. FSIS Directive 4735.4 - Report Assaults, Threats, Intimidation, or Interference (For use by FSIS personnel)
2. FSIS Directive 4735.7 - Industry Accusations Against Inspection Personnel

These directives are available on the FSIS Web site (www.fsis.usda.gov).

We ask everyone to please reflect on the content of this memorandum and to make a personal commitment to do everything possible to ensuring a professional, business-like relationship with each other.



Workplace Violence Assessment – Employee Interviews

Implementation Proposal

Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce

_____ **Subcommittee**

Assessment Objectives

The objectives of the Workplace Violence Prevention Interviews are:

- Interview 20% of _____ employees.
- Gather a broad range of information that provides input to the Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce on the level and makeup of a potential for workplace violence.
- Gather specific information on the current usage of Agency mechanisms for addressing workplace violence.
- Gather information to assist appropriate Agency mechanisms in addressing urgent workplace violence situations.
- Convey the Agency emphasis on the workplace violence issue to _____ employees.
- Interview process to be completed during the third and fourth quarter of fiscal year.

Background

In response to urgent concerns for issues of workplace violence, the Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce made recommendations for immediate action items, which include interviews of _____ employees. The purpose of the interviews is to determine the scope and the make up of the potential for workplace violence that may or may not be known. The In-Plant Subcommittee of the taskforce was tasked with formulating recommendations, including a clear definition and method for the interview process.

Desired Outcome

The outcome of the interview process should yield the following reports:

- Compilation of specific interviews and summation of each interview by the implementation teams conducting the interviews.
- Ongoing feedback to the FSIS Workplace Violence Prevention Assessment Team to alert for imminent risk situations that require follow-up investigation by appropriate entities.
- Recommendations for Training Committee(s) for content and emphasis for future training efforts.

Proposal

The In-Plant Subcommittee recommends a two-fold process of interviews that will include:

1. In-person interviews with _____ employees
2. Online survey distributed via Outlook

These processes will run independently from each other and are intended to yield different data. The online survey is intended to gather information toward an assessment of overall workplace violence potential. The online survey should also provide information that points to specific locations where a potential for workplace violence exists.

The in-person interviews are intended to provide an interactive exchange with employees in specific areas of concern. The personal interviews will ask a wider range and more specific questions about employee knowledge of workplace violence issues and actual situations involving a potential for workplace violence. The interactive structure of the interview should enable the process to gather specific information to determine:

- The scope and nature of potential workplace violence situations in the ____office environment.
- The exposure to current mechanisms for addressing workplace violence issues
- Reasons why current mechanisms are not fully utilized
- Reasons why current mechanisms are not fully effective
- Identify workplace violence situations that escape current thinking on the problem

Implementation Methodology

In-Person Interviews

- Site visits for interviews during regular working hours.
- Confidentiality protocol for interviews (Exception: Imminent danger situations requiring immediate investigation).

Email Surveys via Outlook

- Agency-wide distribution to _____ employees of workplace violence surveys with interactive Intranet web-based response.
- Automatic database compilation of responses to assist in preparation of risk assessment by location and priority.

Independence of Methods

- In-Person and Email surveys to be run independently with no correlation of results to ensure that there are no overlap or duplication of results.
- Time frame for completion of overall process is 6 months.
- Ongoing feedback to FSIS Workplace Violence Prevention Assessment Team during interview process and survey process to address situations with a strong potential for incident.

Risk Assessment for Determination of Interview Emphasis

- Identify Locations for Risk of Workplace Violence
 - specific office location assessment; or
 - overall office location assessment
- Identify Environmental Risk Factors
 - Common
 - Unique
- Identify Geographical Risk Factors
- Identify Situational Risk Factors
- Identify Physical Risk Factors
- Identify Known Risk Factors (i.e., external vs. internal)
 - previous reports of threat
 - previous reports of violence
 - any incidents reported to law enforcement

Logistical Considerations

- Sample size to be 20% of the approximately _____ employees. Interviews per district to be determined from the percentage figure.
 - Interviews to be conducted during regular tours of duty, when possible.
 - _____ interviewing teams within each district.

Attachment One

Online Survey

Method: This survey is to be distributed to Outlook distribution list “_____”. The Office of Policy, Program Development and Evaluation, Evaluation and Analysis Division will facilitate the structure and delivery of the survey. The survey will be delivered as an Intranet link via Outlook messaging. The Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce will automatically compile the responses to the survey into a database for ongoing and final review.

For logistical reasons, the survey questions will be kept at a minimum and will be used as a screening device for developing more specific questionnaires and focusing on areas that reveal levels of concern as determined by the Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce.

The format for the initial online survey should be as follows:

The following questionnaire is to assist the Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce in determining problems and concerns in the workplace. Responses to the questions are kept confidential and respondent’s identity is kept confidential. Respondents will be free from reprisal, and any investigations of urgent workplace violence situations will be conducted through due process.

1. Are you familiar with any actual or potential workplace violence situations where you are assigned that have occurred within the last year?
2. Have you ever heard comments by _____ personnel that described a desire or intention to do physical harm to yourself or other FSIS employees?
3. Do you work in an environment where a firearm is kept for any reason?
4. Have you even been concerned for your personal safety while at work?
5. Have you ever complained to your supervisor about being harassed or intimidated?
6. Are you familiar with the procedures you should follow if confronted by anyone in a hostile manner?
7. Are you familiar with the Workplace Violence Prevention brochure?
8. Has the subject of workplace violence ever been covered during work meetings that you have attended?
9. Do you wish to be contacted concerning any of the above matters by a member of the Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce?

Attachment Two

Personal Survey

Method: This survey is to be delivered via an in-person interactive discussion format. The targeted time frame for the interview is 60 minutes.

Responses to the survey are to be kept confidential and shall not be discussed with the field office supervisor or any other person(s) at that location. Further, responses will not be discussed with anyone outside of the Workplace Violence Prevention Taskforce.

Questions:

1. Are you familiar with news stories or Agency statements involving Agency employees in situations of workplace violence?
2. Are you familiar with any situations of actual workplace violence at any time during your career?
3. Are you familiar with any actual or potential workplace violence situations where you are assigned that have occurred within the last year?
4. Have you ever witnessed or been involved in a physical confrontation with an FSIS employee? If “yes”, explain the circumstances:
5. Have you ever been threatened with physical harm while doing your job? If “yes”, was the threat from an industry or an FSIS employee? Give details to briefly describe the incident.
6. Have you ever witnessed or been a part of a verbal confrontation with an industry or FSIS employee while performing your job? If “yes”, explain the circumstances:
7. Has an industry or FSIS employee ever threatened your job security? If “yes”, explain the circumstances:
8. Have you even been concerned for your personal safety while at work? Describe your concerns:
9. Have you ever heard comments by plant or FSIS personnel that described a desire or intention to do physical harm to yourself or other FSIS or industry employees?
10. Do you work in an environment where a firearm is kept for any reason?

11. Do you carry a cellular phone with you (on your person or in a carry bag or purse) while you are working? Do you have a cellular phone in your car that you use to and from or at work?
12. Do you know what procedures are in place to call law enforcement and emergency medical services in the event of a workplace violence incident?
13. Have you ever complained to an Agency supervisor about being harassed or intimidated by industry persons? If so, how was the complaint handled?
14. Have you ever been discouraged from pursuing a complaint of being harassed or intimidated by industry persons? If so, what did you do next?
15. Are you familiar with the procedures you should follow if confronted by anyone in a hostile manner? If so, how did you learn of these procedures?
16. Are you familiar with your rights regarding industry accusations against inspection personnel?
17. Have you ever read or seen FSIS Directive 4735.4, *Reporting Assault, Threats, Intimidation, or Interference*?
18. Have you ever completed an FSIS Form 4735-4, *Reporting Form for Assault, Threats of Assault, Intimidation, or Interference*? If not, do you know how to use one if you need to?
19. If you have ever completed an FSIS Form 4735-4, was the form answered and a copy returned to you? If so, was the response discussed with you?
20. Are you familiar with the Workplace Violence Prevention brochure?
21. Do you know or do you have access to the telephone number for the Workplace Violence Prevention hotline?
22. Has the subject of workplace violence ever been covered during work meetings that you have attended?

United States Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service

PLEASE POST

ASSISTANCE FOR FOOD SAFETY OFFICERS

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ASKS YOU TO BE RESPONSIVE TO REQUESTS FROM FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL FOOD SAFETY OFFICERS THAT ENCOUNTER POSSIBLE VIOLENT OFFENDERS.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and other State and local food safety officers enforce laws to protect consumers from unsafe or illegally labeled meat, poultry and egg products. FSIS inspectors and compliance officers do *not* carry weapons. If they encounter violent subjects, or hostile and dangerous situations, they require police assistance.

Inspectors generally work in specific plants that prepare foods. Compliance officers and other agents work wherever foods are transported, held or sold. They investigate criminal violations, serve subpoenas for records, and stop the sale of contaminated foods. They work days and nights and on weekends and holidays. Some work undercover or conduct covert surveillance. If food safety officials know that they may encounter resistance, they make advance arrangements for Federal or State Police assistance. If hostile situations develop without warning, they call local police.

These calls must be handled as any other request for law enforcement assistance. Please keep in mind that, if the food safety officers are in the presence of a volatile individual, they may speak calmly to avoid aggravating the situation. Ask if the call is urgent.

If you have questions about FSIS enforcement or wish to request more information, call the Assistant District Manager for Enforcement _____, local Compliance Officers _____, or the Compliance and Investigations Division at (202) 418-8874.

For information about FSIS enforcement, see the FSIS Home Page at www.fsis.usda.gov.

On June 21, 2000, two Federal Compliance Officers and one California investigator were shot and killed during a food safety inquiry at a sausage plant. A fourth State employee escaped after being fired on and chased down a busy street at mid-afternoon. The government officials had called for local police backup. But the request was made in a calm and measured tone. The call was scheduled as routine, and backup was not immediately dispatched. The perpetrator has been arrested and charged with three counts of capital murder and one count of attempted murder.