



## KEEP SAFE

A Monthly Publication for Texas Electric Cooperatives

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### Workplace violence: an unfortunate fact of life

Every year, many people die on the job. The leading cause of death is traditionally highway accidents, but workplace homicide is among the top three causes. You might not expect to be a murder victim while at work, but it does happen more often than you might think.

Homicide is just one extreme example of something called workplace violence. Technically, workplace violence is any violent act that occurs in the workplace and creates a hostile work environment that affects your physical or psychological well being. That's the technical definition. Here are some examples you may be familiar with: harassment, intimidation, threats, theft, stalking, assaults, arson, sabotage, bomb threats, taking hostages, kidnapping, extortion and suicide.

#### Why you should care

Every workplace, regardless of its size or type of business, runs the risk of falling victim to workplace violence. Sometimes it is just a random act of violence, but often there are warning signs.

You should know whether your job places you at high risk for violence. Violence is generally more likely in workplaces where workers exchange money, work alone at night, handle valuable items, and work as public safety employees or in a high crime area. The person who commits the act may not be a total stranger. There is a good chance you may already know the person. People commit violent acts for many reasons. For example, they may be committing a robbery or they may be seeking revenge.

Employees can also commit violent acts in the workplace. Some of us may not be able to effectively handle stress on- or off-the-job and turn to violence as a way to solve problems. If you feel you could use some counseling for personal or employment issues, you should take advantage of your employee assistance program.

There is no sure way to tell if someone will become violent, but there are some warning signs. The person might make a threat, either written or verbal. He or she may be fascinated with weaponry or acts of violence or may try to sabotage projects or equipment. He or she may abuse alcohol or drugs or express feelings of hopelessness or heightened anxiety.

Don't take these signs lightly. If you notice someone who has these traits, encourage them to use the employee assistance program or seek outside counseling. If you think the potential for violence is serious enough, notify a supervisor.

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Thank You...

*Sending thanks to everyone who attended the 2008 Loss Control Conference in March. It's always great to see familiar faces and have the opportunity to meet new people.*

*Both the 2008 scholarship auction and golf tournament were successful raising over \$24,000. These funds will assist in providing college scholarships to eligible graduating seniors in 2009.*

*The generosity and dedication that is given to TEC's Loss Control Program is highly appreciated.*

(Workplace violence continued from page 1)

## What you should know about conflict management

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First, here's what you should NOT do:

- ◆ Speak rapidly, raise your volume or use an accusatory tone.
- ◆ Make physical contact.
- ◆ Challenge, threaten or dare the individual.
- ◆ Make false statements or promises you can't keep.
- ◆ Invade the person's personal space.
- ◆ Pose in a challenging stance, such as directly opposite someone, with your hands on your hips.

## Call 811

*Planning a home improvement job? Planting a tree? Installing a fence or deck? WAIT! Here's what you need to know first*

Whether you are planning to do it yourself or hire a professional, smart digging means calling 811 before each job.

Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a call — even small projects like planting trees and shrubs. The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple utility lines in a common area. Digging without calling can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm you and those around you and potentially result in fines and repair costs. Calling 811 before every digging job gets your underground utility lines marked for free and helps prevent undesired consequences.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

— Common Ground Alliance

Here are some things you SHOULD do:

- ◆ Project calmness by moving and speaking slowly.
- ◆ Listen attentively and encourage the person to talk.
- ◆ Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area.
- ◆ Employ delay tactics to give the person time to calm down (offering a glass of water can work well).
- ◆ Keep at least three feet between you and the other person.
- ◆ Help the person break problems down into smaller, more manageable problems.

If at all possible, remove yourself from the area and notify a supervisor if someone seems to be becoming angry. Do not let these situations escalate. Remember, workplace violence is more common than you think.

*Source: Clement Communications, Inc. Meeting Guides*

## Upcoming Loss Control Schools

<b>Basic Pole Climbing School</b> - (Merkel)	April 7 - 11
<b>Transformer School</b> - (Merkel)	April 15 - 18
<b>Basic Pole Climbing School</b> - (Gonzales)	April 22 - 25
<b>Hotline 1 – 4 School</b> - (Henderson)	April 28 – May 2
<b>Troubleshooting School</b> - (Gonzales)	May 6 – 9
<b>Bucket Truck Operations and Digger Operations School</b> - (Merkel)	May 13 - 14
<b>Regulator, Recloser, Capacitor</b> - (Quitman)	May 20 - 23
<b>Underground School</b> - (Gonzales)	June 9 - 13
<b>Transformer School</b> - (Gonzales)	June 24 - 27
<b>Troubleshooting School</b> - (Greenville)	July 8 - 11

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