From 1994-2003, there were 96 work-related homicides in Kentucky. Twenty-nine of the victims owned their businesses at the time of death. Most work-related homicides occurred in the retail trade industry (Fig. 1) and worked in the technical, sales, administrative support occupation (Fig. 2). Robbery was a motive in 31% and domestic violence was involved in 19% of all work-related homicides. As of July 2004, there have been 6 work-related homicides and all involved firearms.

The first case involved a male postal worker who was fatally shot, allegedly by a fellow postal worker as he returned home from work.

A 40-year-old female firefighter was killed in the second case while responding to a domestic violence call. The firefighter had arrived at the residence before local police and was approaching the suspect’s fatally wounded wife in the front yard when she was shot. She later died of multiple gunshot wounds.

A third case involved a 41-year-old female restaurant manager who was shot by her estranged spouse. The couple had been talking outside the store prior to the incident. The estranged spouse entered the establishment, fired multiple shots, then exited the restaurant. Two nearby employees were not physically hurt but suffered the emotional trauma of seeing their coworker’s murder.

A 69-year-old male gas station attendant was robbed and murdered in the fourth case. The attendant was alone at night when the fatal incident happened and was found the next morning.

In the fifth case, a 52-year-old male drug store owner and pharmacist was shot multiple times by an elderly homeless man in the early evening. The pharmacist was closing and leaving the drug store when he was approached by the man in the pharmacy parking lot. He received money from the homeless man and entered the pharmacy to credit the man’s account. The pharmacist was fatally shot after he returned to the parking lot to deliver change to the man.

To prevent workplace violence:

- Assessment for workplace violence risks should be done in all workplaces.
- Workplaces should have policies that clearly delineate that violence is not appropriate during any workplace interaction and violence policies should mirror other workplace policies in terms of strategies for reporting and investigation of incidents, and progressive discipline.
- A clear and consistent reporting system for workplace violence should be in place and every worker should understand how it works.
- Safety training should be attended by employers, supervisors, and employees.
- Policy, training, and employee assistance for domestic violence should be implemented in collaboration with community service providers.
Assessment for workplace violence risks should be done in all workplaces.

Workplaces should look at their sexual harassment policy and use it as a framework for a workplace violence prevention policy since it usually includes a clear statement about expectations in the workplace, how and whom to report, the procedure for investigating and following up on reports, and the consequences if the policy is found to have been violated.

Workplaces should have policies that clearly delineate that violence is not appropriate during any workplace interaction and violence policies should mirror other workplace policies in terms of strategies for reporting and investigation of incidents, and progressive discipline.

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All workplace violence or threats should be recorded and reported to supervisors, their employee assistance program (EAP), or some other entity as soon as possible. Prompt medical attention, if necessary, should be provided. If an employee is a victim of violence, victims should be informed of their legal right to prosecute perpetrators.

Safety training should be attended by employers, supervisors, and employees.

Workplace safety training should include recognition, avoidance, and defusing of potentially violent situations. Employers and employees should report violent, intimidating, threatening, and disruptive behavior. Emergency numbers should be provided. Training should include: how to manage hostile persons, managing anger, techniques for conflict resolution, stress management, and crisis response.

Employees should have access to agencies for conflict resolution such as mediators through an employee assistance program. For information on Kentucky workplace violence training, contact Ms. Debra Dawahare, JD, at Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP Attorneys, 250 W. Main St., Lexington, KY 40507, phone: 859-288-7617.

Policy, training, and employee assistance for domestic violence should be implemented in collaboration with community service providers.

Basic information about crime, victim’s rights, access to services, protection from intimidation, and employer and employee roles in prosecution of perpetrators is available through the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association at (502) 209-5382, and the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs at (502) 226-2704, or your regional spouse abuse or rape crisis center.

References:

For more information, contact:
KY Fatality Assessment & Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC)
333 Waller Ave., Suite 202
Lexington, KY 40504
1-800-204-3223 (toll-free)
www.kiprc.uky.edu

The KY FACE program is an occupational fatality program at KIPRC funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (Cooperative Agreement No.: U60/CCU409879-10).