



A Few Thoughts on Safety From Your Security Committee

Security Tip #28: Mitigating Potential Internal Security Risks

Your Security Committee has periodically counseled courts to adopt an active shooter strategy—and to practice it annually. But, it is important to keep in mind, the origin of a security threat can be internal as well as external. Case histories have taught that situations which could evolve into violent confrontations may originate within the courthouse workforce. A comprehensive security strategy includes a plan to mitigate such potential internal threats. Many security experts strongly recommend the adoption of an interdisciplinary risk management approach. This will require not only some preparation and training, but also the development of established internal policies.

The objective of a risk management program is to identify personnel within the workplace who exhibit escalating hostility that could trigger revenge or destructive behavior. Although there is no reliable profile of an active shooter, such escalating anger or frustration from a major life-changing experience, adverse job action, domestic discord, or internal dispute, are common characteristics.

When a persistent pattern of hostility or escalating anger is detected, confidential intervention and development of a remedial plan are imperative. This process is typically initiated by notification to the chief judge of that court or their designee. Of course, if an

act of violence is imminent, it should be reported to the U.S. Marshal in your district for immediate response. Otherwise, the chief judge, in consultation with human resources, the U.S. Marshal, and the employee's direct office manager, should confer and determine the appropriate course of action. This may include professional counseling, psychological evaluation or, in extreme cases, removal from the workplace.

To develop an effective risk management strategy, it is important to properly introduce the plan to all court staff and building occupants. Their participation is obviously critical. It is imperative to stress that all communications to the assessment team will remain confidential, as well as the original source of the information. Employees should not only be instructed on the type of behavior worthy of reporting, but also the disturbing number of internal active shooter incidents preceded by such warning signs.

The availability of a mental health professional to provide guidance in the assessment process can be a valuable resource in the development of an effective response strategy. It is also important to emphasize that all communications with the assessment team are confidential and will only be disclosed to individuals with a need-to-know basis. For further guidance in developing a risk management program, contact your district U.S. Marshal.

Security Committee
Federal Judges Association

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