

## Weapons in the Workplace: Risk Management for Management Liability & Employment Practices

*Emergency service organizations (ESOs) must address concerns about weapons and violence in their work environments. At a time when nearly all states have passed concealed weapon laws, it is recommended that ESOs consider implementing a Weapons in the Workplace policy. ESO leaders are responsible for taking reasonable measures to protect their members (employees and volunteers) from workplace violence. This Communiqué offers risk management guidelines to implement and administer a Weapons in the Workplace policy fairly in your ESO and generally protect against violence in the workplace.*

### **Sample “Weapons in the Workplace” Policy**

XYZ prohibits and does not tolerate weapons on XYZ property, or during any XYZ-related activity. Weapons include, but are not limited to, visible and concealed weapons, including those for which the owner holds the necessary permits. Weapons can include firearms/guns, knives or swords with a blade longer than three inches, explosive or chemical materials, or any other objects that could be used to harass, intimidate, or injure another individual, employee, volunteer, manager, or supervisor.

Employees or volunteers who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including employment termination.

### **Reporting Procedure**

Any employee or volunteer who is subject to, or observes, violent behavior or threat of violent behavior, a firearm or other weapon, or any situation that appears to be potentially dangerous, must immediately report such action to his/her supervisor, department director/Chief Officer, human resources department, or Chief Administrator/Fire Chief. The reporting person is not required to directly confront the person who is the source of the report, question, or complaint before notifying any of the individuals listed. Nevertheless, the reporting person is required to make a reasonable effort to report policy violations or make workplace violence or threats of violence known should they exist.

### **Risk Management Tips for Violence Prevention**

Instituting a Weapons in the Workplace policy is part of a larger program to prevent violence in the workplace. Consider the following risk management tips for maintaining a comprehensive program for violence prevention for your ESO:

- Conduct criminal background checks for all employees and volunteers (both current and potential members and applicants).
- As part of the selection and hiring process, conduct criminal background checks for all employees and volunteers.
- Provide periodic training and education for all members regarding preventing violence in the workplace and weapons in the workplace, including domestic violence.
- Encourage members to promptly report threats and incidents of violence both within and outside the ESO.

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- Develop an emergency response plan pertaining to workplace violence.
- Complete a worksite risk analysis/assessment to identify where the organization may be vulnerable, and determine what steps can be taken to reduce risk.
- Make an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) available that can help personnel deal appropriately with personal and professional issues that can lead to reduced work productivity, stress, depression, violence and other problems.
- Advertise the EAP or other resources for victims of domestic violence.
- Take precautionary measures when a member is terminated from the ESO (i.e. conducted in a secure setting with a witness present; when necessary develop a strategy for exiting the premises with concern for security and the departing member's dignity).
- Post signs around ESO facilities warning members and visitors that weapons must not be carried onto ESO property unless needed for law enforcement or other official job duties.
- Consider implementing visitor procedures.