

Defining Workplace Violence

Cal/OSHA enforcement of SB 553 in 2024

TYPES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AS DEFINED BY SB 553

Senate Bill (SB) 553 was signed into law in September 2023 and mandates a comprehensive Workplace Violence Prevention Plan (WVPP) for nearly all California employers, effective July 1, 2024. Enforced under California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), SB 553 outlines four types of workplace violence:

Type
1

CRIMINAL INTENT

Committed by a person who has no legitimate business at the worksite and includes violent acts by anyone who enters the workplace or approaches workers with the intent to commit a crime.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

- **Location:** Risk escalates in high-crime areas.
- **Cash/Valuables Handling:** High susceptibility for businesses engaged in cash transactions or holding valuable items.
- **Isolation:** Vulnerability increases for remote or poorly secured workplaces.
- **Lack of Security Measures:** Absence of CCTV, security personnel, or alarm system.

SIGNS/INDICATORS:

- **Suspicious Individuals:** Presence of unfamiliar individuals loitering near the premises.
- **Unusual Requests:** Visitors inquiring about security measures or showing excessive interest.
- **Previous Incidents:** History of nearby thefts, break-ins, or suspicious activities.
- **Employee Concerns:** Reports of feeling unsafe or witnessing suspicious behaviors.

Type
2

CUSTOMER/CLIENT

Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, or visitors.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

- **Service Industry:** Elevated risk for public service, retail, or healthcare sectors.
- **Emotional Situations:** Potential escalation during customer complaints or disputes.
- **High-Stress Environments:** Aggression triggers include long wait times or pressure-packed settings.
- **Accessibility:** Businesses easily accessible without stringent security protocols.
- **Isolation:** Isolated workspaces increase employee vulnerability to client aggression, especially when working alone or out of sight of colleagues or security.

SIGNS/INDICATORS:

- **Verbal Threats:** Hostile or threatening expressions by customers.
- **Physical Aggression:** Evidence of raised voices, threatening gestures, or altercations.
- **Refusal to Cooperate:** Non-compliance with rules or refusal to cooperate by customers.
- **Complaint Patterns:** Frequent complaints or incidents involving aggressive customers.

Type
3

EMPLOYEE ON EMPLOYEE

Violence against an employee by a present or former employee, supervisor, or manager.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

- **Workplace Conflict:** Potential escalation from unresolved disputes among staff.
- **Hierarchical Issues:** Presence of bullying, harassment, or negative power dynamics.
- **Stressful Work Environment:** Contributing factors include tight deadlines or job insecurity.
- **Substance Abuse:** Aggression between coworkers can stem from workplace substance misuse.

SIGNS/INDICATORS:

- **Hostile Behavior:** Increase in disputes, yelling, or disrespectful interactions.
- **Isolation:** Avoidance of specific coworkers or social situations.
- **Physical Altercations:** Incidents of physical confrontations among employees.
- **HR Complaints:** Increase in formal complaints regarding interpersonal conflicts.

Type
4

RELATIONSHIP

Violence committed in the workplace by a person who does not work there but has or is known to have had a personal relationship with an employee.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

- **Personal Relationships:** Issues stemming from current or past relationships.
- **Domestic Issues:** Workplace disruptions due to external domestic problems.
- **Stalking Behavior:** Obsessive following or surveillance by individuals.
- **History of Abuse:** Records of past abuse or restraining orders.

SIGNS/INDICATORS:

- **Unwanted Contact:** Persistent unwanted communication attempts.
- **Harassment:** Threatening messages or possessive actions.
- **Physical Altercations:** Workplace incidents involving a personal acquaintance.
- **Changes in Behavior:** Signs of fear, anxiety, or distress related to personal issues.