



RECOGNIZE

How You Can Notice the Warning Signs of Violence

DE-ESCALATION SERIES FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OWNERS AND OPERATORS



RECOGNIZE



ASSESS



DE-ESCALATE



REPORT

RECOGNIZE



Co-workers, peers, friends, and family are often best positioned to **recognize the warning signs** of someone who may be on a pathway to violence. People who resort to violence are often driven by a combination of predispositions, personal or professional stressors, and assorted resentments or grievances. Routinely maintaining situational awareness is a fundamental requirement to enable successful recognition.



Situational awareness means observing what is occurring around you and understanding what you see and hear.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ A person's behaviors and communications are often disclosed through nonverbal means. Pay attention to what people are saying through facial expressions, emotions, and body language.
- ✓ Individuals are unique and will likely not discuss intentions or needs in a uniform manner. Behaviors that some people find troubling or threatening may very well be someone's way of asking for help.
- ✓ People have bad days. They can become sad, argumentative, or angry; this does not mean there is intent to cause harm.
- ✓ Confirmation of a threat requires a solid understanding of context and a holistic assessment of the person's circumstances and stressors.
- ✓ When you report, you create an opportunity to prevent potentially violent situations.

ACTION

When warning signs of potential violent behavior are noticed, individuals can help in two primary ways: clearly communicate the threat while seeking safety and by informing others. Early action can enable assistance before the threat of violence becomes imminent, as well as offer valuable warning to others in the surrounding area.



CLEARLY COMMUNICATE THE THREAT WHILE SEEKING SAFETY

If you recognize that a hostile act is occurring or is imminent, remove yourself from the situation and seek safety while communicating the threat and suggested response in a loud, clear voice (e.g., "Gun!" "Run!" "Bomb!" "Get Out!").



INFORM OTHERS

If you recognize concerning behaviors and there is no imminent threat, inform others of what you have seen or know. Tell a supervisor, manager, security guard, or other designated employee or team member.

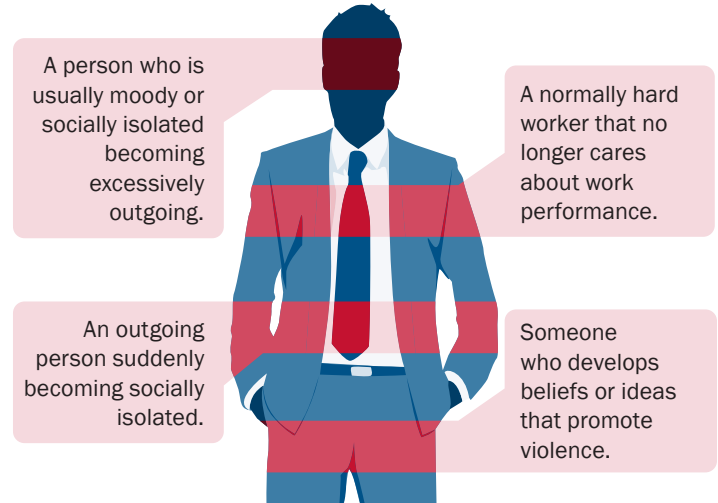
RISK FACTORS/STRESSORS

Individuals may experience situations that cause stress or increase the risk for violence in their lives. When viewed in totality, these stressors/risk factors may present reason for concern. Examples could include, but are not limited to the following:

- Financial difficulty
- Illness or death among family or friends
- Addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc.)
- Break-up or divorce
- Employment actions (promotion, demotion, termination, etc.)
- Conflict with peers, co-workers, or managers
- Legal problems
- Transfer or relocation

CHANGES IN BASELINE BEHAVIOR

Baseline behavior is an individual's normal mood and typical responses to everyday activities. Those most familiar with an individual will be able to notice a change in baseline behaviors. Examples could include, but are not limited to the following:



BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

OBSERVABLE CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR.

Organizational members typically have some degree of familiarity with each other and are frequently able to spot changes in a peer's behavior. Examples could include, but not limited to the following:

- Disgruntlement toward peers
- Unwillingness to comply with established rules or policies
- Stalking, harassing, or bullying
- Making inappropriate statements or jokes
- Threats of violence, either verbally or written
- Expressing interest or support for violent extremist beliefs or organizations
- Fascination with previous incidents of violence
- New, increased, or unhealthy interest in weapons
- Asking about security outside of assigned roles and responsibilities

OBSERVABLE PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS.

It is difficult to determine a stranger's intent due to lack of familiarity. Individuals will have to rely on physical indicators of aggression to determine if a stranger is potentially hostile. Examples could include, but not limited to the following:

- Argumentative or uncooperative behaviors
- Clenched jaw and/or balled fists
- Pacing or restlessness
- Trembling or shaking
- Dressed and/or behaving in a manner that is not typical of the environment or context
- Violating others' personal space
- Making specific threats to inflict harm to themselves or others
- Displaying or making threats to use a weapon

HELPFUL LINKS

CISA Pathway to Violence: cisa.gov/pathway-violence

CISA Employee Vigilance through the Power of Hello: cisa.gov/power-hello

CISA Insider Threat Mitigation Resources: cisa.gov/insider-threat-mitigation

CISA De-escalation Products and Resources: cisa.gov/de-escalation