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## Detecting Potentially Violent Behavior in the Workplace

***CNN – March 11** - At least 10 people were killed Tuesday in a shooting spree that spanned two small southern Alabama towns, state officials confirmed. The gunman, who turned the gun on himself and the wife and child of a sheriff's deputy, were among those killed.*

***Orange County Register – March 18** - A man police said is the suspect in the slayings of two Southern California Gas Co. employees in Pomona and Anaheim, shot himself in his vehicle outside the Anaheim police station this morning and was hospitalized in critical condition with a head wound, police reported.*

**SANTA ANA, California (March 20, 2009)** – Universal Protection Service, the largest provider of security services to the commercial real estate market in Southern California and one of the nation's top 10 largest uniform protection companies, has become concerned with the recent increase of violent behavior against employers and co-workers:

- Workplace violence costs businesses in excess of \$50 billion annually
- Nearly 2 million employees per year are victims of workplace violence, including homicides, harassment, threats and attacks
- 25,000+ employees are attacked by partners or spouses in the workplace every year

The recent economic crisis, high unemployment rate and financial uncertainty have increased the risk of violent crimes, especially when associated with the workplace. These recent incidents of violence only serve to highlight the tensions between employer, co-workers and employees in an unstable market.

According to the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) and FBI's National Center for Analysis and Violent Crime, the majority of the U.S. workforce does not recognize the warning signs of potentially violent behavior. Workplace violence is defined as any action that may threaten the safety of an employee, impact an employee's physical or psychological well-being, or cause damage to company property. An effective workplace violence prevention program includes training all employees on what signs to look for and how to communicate such information to appropriate company officials. Universal offers the following tips for detecting potentially violent behavior.

### Red Flags

- **Unreasonable:** they constantly make slighting references and blame others for their problems, are rarely happy about what is going on and are consistently unreasonable.
- **Controlling:** they consider themselves to be superior, with a compulsive need to always force their opinion on and control others.
- **Paranoid:** they believe their employer, boss, other employees and neighbors are out to get them, are convinced there is a conspiracy to all functions of society, and are essentially paranoid.
- **Weapons Enthusiast with Military/Police Fixation:** they may own firearms and have an overly high interest in the military, law enforcement or underground military groups.
- **Irresponsible:** they don't take responsibility for their behavior; faults or mistakes are always someone else's.
- **Litigious:** they continually threaten legal action against others, including their employer, and constantly file one grievance after another.
- **Angry:** they have many hate and anger issues with co-workers, family, friends or the government.
- **Violent:** they applaud and demonstrate an uncomfortable fascination with violent acts portrayed in the media, such as racial incidences, domestic violence, shooting sprees, executions, etc.



- **Vindictive:** they make statements such as, "he will get his" or "one of these days I'll get even."
- **Odd:** they may be good at what they do, paying close attention to details, but they lack people skills. Their presence makes others uncomfortable.
- **Unhealthy:** they may begin to appear unclean or demonstrate poor hygiene, experience sleep disorders, fatigue, sudden weight loss/gain or other health-related problems. They may be addicted to alcohol and/or drugs.

As an employer, there are several precautions you should take to prevent aggressive behavior in your workspace, including instituting policies and procedures for detecting and handling violent situations. These could include conducting training on threat assessment, long-term security and alternative dispute resolution. Some additional proactive measures you may consider include installing metal detectors, bullet-proof glass, closed-circuit cameras or entrance controls in certain parts of the building.

Employers and employees must work together in order to address the significant problem of workplace violence, thus having a better chance of decreasing the propensity of which it occurs.

#### **About Universal Protection Service**

Founded in 1965, Universal Protection Service combines an innovative mix of tradition with cutting edge systems and technology to keep pace with the ever-evolving needs of today's business environments. Headquartered in Santa Ana, Calif., with offices located throughout Arizona, California, Colorado and Washington, UPS employs hands-on, highly experienced management teams and continuous training to deliver consistent, high quality security solutions. Universal Protection Service is a division of **Universal Services of America**, which also includes Universal Building Maintenance, Universal Protection Security Systems and Universal Fire/Life Safety Services (PPO# 14417). Visit our website at: <http://www.universalpro.com>.