



## **Recent shootings highlight importance of workplace safety**

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As far as problems with employees go, companies spend a lot of time thinking through how to keep from getting sued. But there's a whole other world of dealing with a problem employee — as Friday's latest shooting in New York City reminds us — that no executive wants to fathom.

Security expert **Jeff Bilyeu** of **THE BILYEU GROUP, LLC** puts it this way: "I would prefer (a fired employee) to go directly to an attorney, versus a pawn shop."

From the movie theater massacre in Aurora, Colo., to the shooting of Sikhs in Milwaukee, Wis., to initial reports that today's shooting in front of the Empire State Building stemmed from a disgruntled employee, there are plenty of reminders of how shocking violence can befall large groups of people. Bilyeu, who does a range of security work here and abroad for Fortune 500 companies, said employee terminations or other causes for a falling out can turn in that direction.

So how to prepare?

- **Have policies in place.** Having something on the books about workplace violence, and reviewing it periodically with all employees, sets an important tone, Bilyeu said. Some companies opt for a complete zero tolerance policy, stopping any kind of inappropriate behavior in its tracks and weeding out problematic personnel.
- **Have a way to talk.** Establishing anonymous employee help line can serve a lot of purposes. But a key one is giving people a place to report illegal activity or concerning behavior.
- **Be prepared for action.** Firing an employee is the most common issue that could set off workplace violence. In that or similar scenarios, companies should be mindful, from the small stuff to the big. There are ways to conduct a termination talk that will keep you safe, and experts like Bilyeu include 24/7 surveillance and other measures as part of their service lineup.
- **Get employees ready.** Part of the policy approach is having an evacuation plan and security training, so that if something happens, everyone knows where they should go and what they should do. So how to know when drastic measures are fitting? Bilyeu says every termination or difficult situation deserves serious attention, but the most intense stuff comes into play if an employee has a history of disciplinary problems or concerning behavior.

The big thing to remember, he said, is that it really can happen. "No company, small or large, is immune to workplace violence," Bilyeu said.

Brian Reisinger covers banking/finance, state government and manufacturing. You can follow him on Twitter at @BrianJReisinger