

CITY OF CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA

NUMBER 24.0

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/28/01

**SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES - SUPERSEDES: 08/16/01
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION
POLICY**

I. PURPOSE

The City of Chesapeake is committed to providing a safe environment for all city employees and citizens conducting business on city property. Our culture has become increasingly violent. As a result of this increase, violence is now the second leading cause of workplace fatalities. The purpose of this Administrative Regulation is to educate employees, reduce the risk of violence at our workplace, and to establish a standard procedure for dealing with threatening and violent situations.

II. TYPES OF VIOLENT, OR POTENTIALLY VIOLENT SITUATIONS COVERED BY THIS POLICY:

A. Between employees

There are situations where relationships between employees, or between an employee and the supervisor, or between a former employee and the supervisor result in strong negative feelings by the individuals involved. These situations may be potentially violent.

There are certain warning signs of potential violence. These include making direct, veiled or joking threats of harm; a history of violent behavior off-duty; using physical intimidation; excessive discussion of weapons or carrying a concealed weapon; expressing bizarre thoughts such as perceiving conspiracies; obsession towards a failed or imagined love interest; holding a grudge against a co-worker or supervisor; fascination with incidents of workplace violence in the news; making hostile, degrading or inflammatory statements.

B. Dealing with the Public

While the City has a strong commitment to customer service we do not intend for employees to be subjected to continuous verbal abuse or threats by the customer, either in person or over the telephone. Common instances of irate or abusive customers include water service terminations, delinquent taxpayers, rejected employment applicants, and people cited for City Code violations.

C. Off-the-Job

An employee may be involved in a personal dispute with family members or neighbors. These people usually know where the employee works, and they may follow him or her to the workplace to carry on the dispute. These disputes may endanger the employee and/or co-workers and citizens.

III. PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW IN A VIOLENT OR POTENTIALLY VIOLENT SITUATION - EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Report Potentially Violent Situations to Your Supervisor

It is each employee's responsibility to be alert to potential threats and harassment and to immediately report all incidents of threats. The first step in reducing violence in the workplace is to identify situations, which hold the potential for turning violent. If an employee is aware of a threat, such as the situations listed above, the employee must inform his or her supervisor of the potential for violence.

An employee who has secured a Protective Order from a court should make his or her supervisor aware of the existence of the Order, and should file a copy of the Order with the Supervisor.

An employee who has been threatened or who has witnessed a threat should inform his or her supervisor. Do not try to evaluate or ignore the seriousness of a threat. All threats, whether considered serious or not, must be immediately reported.

B. Remain Calm in the Event of Verbal Confrontations

Many verbal confrontations can be dealt with by reasoning with the subject but not by arguing with him or her. Do not allow yourself to become involved in verbal sparring with the other person, but remain calm and speak in even tones. As soon as possible, call on supervisors to neutralize the situation.

Those employees whose jobs involve dealing with the public should attend Workplace Violence Prevention Training given by the Department of Human Resources.

C. Report An Incident to Your Supervisor and the Police

Employees must immediately report any incident of threats or abuse, in any of the types of situations described in Section II of this policy.

In the event of an imminent life-threatening situation, the employee should request immediate assistance from the Police Department. In certain departments, "hot lines" will be installed for this purpose. From any City telephone emergency assistance may be obtained by dialing 9-1-1. Stay on the line, if possible, in order to inform the dispatcher of the exact nature of the emergency.

D. Remember Important Information

Information regarding the identity of the abusive person and regarding exactly what took place will be vital and should be reported to the employee's supervisory immediately. Attempt to remember and write down:

1. Any personal information on the subject: name, address, work place, etc.;
2. Description of the person: height, weight, color of hair eyes, clothing, speech, etc.;
3. Date and time of occurrence;
4. Exact words and/or actions of the suspect;
5. Any previous incidents of threats or violence by the subject;
6. Names of other witnesses; attempt to keep them available for statements.

IV. PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW IN A VIOLENT OR POTENTIALLY VIOLENT SITUATION - MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Investigation and Documentation

The initial response to a report of potential violence should be to gather as much information as is possible. The first-line supervisor should interview all witnesses to determine the dates, times, places, names of witnesses, and what was seen and heard. Be alert to the warning signs of potential workplace violence, as described in Section II of this policy.

In any case where there is an imminent life-threatening situation, request immediate assistance from the Chesapeake Police Department.

B. Evaluation

After gathering pertinent facts about the threat or incident, the first-line supervisor, together with the Department head or his or her designee, should evaluate the situation. In cases where an employee has made the threat, involve the Human Resources Director and City Attorney's office in the evaluation process. The following decisions should be made:

1. Whether to involve the Police Department;
2. Whether immediate suspension is warranted;

3. Whether other disciplinary action is warranted;
4. Whether court orders are necessary;
5. Whether employees and property need to be secured;
6. Notify employees who are potential targets of violence;
7. Refer employees to the Magistrate, when appropriate;
8. Make formal or informal referrals to the Employee Assistance Program;
9. Determine whether the threatened employee(s) needs protection on or off City property.

In any case, it is inappropriate to allow intimidation or escalation by a person who has made threats of violence. It is inappropriate to allow the humiliation of an employee. It is inappropriate to allow or to make counter-threats.

C. Follow Through

1. In the event of a threat of violence, management should follow through on the decisions made during the evaluation of the facts.
2. In the event of an actual incident of violence, which results in injury or death, management should use the following check-list of persons to be notified.
 - a) Police and Emergency Medical Personnel (dial 9-1-1 from any City telephone).
 - b) City Manager's Office - The City Manager's Office will notify:
 - 1) Insurance - Insurance will notify OSHA;
 - 2) Public Information;
 - 3) Mayor.
 - c) Human Resources Department - The Human Resources Department will notify:
 - 1) Next-of-Kin;
 - 2) Employee Assistance Program.

Counseling is available to victims of threats of violence and to victims and witnesses of workplace violence, including the families of victims, through the City's Employee Assistance Program.

V. **EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

A. Pre-employment Screening

Prior to employment, every successful applicant must present a certified copy of his or her Criminal History Record, or authorize the City to obtain same, at the City's option. A conviction of any "Crime Against the Person", as defined by Title 18.2, Chapter 4 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, within the five years

immediately preceding employment will automatically disqualify the individual from employment. This disqualification will apply regardless of the state in which the applicant was convicted.

A conviction of such a crime more than five years immediately preceding employment may disqualify an individual from employment when it is determined that hiring the individual in the position applied for would not be in the city's best interests, taking into consideration the duties and responsibilities of the position.

B. Obligation to Report

Any employee who is convicted of any "Crime Against the Person", as defined by Title 18.2, Chapter 4 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, shall report the conviction to his or her immediate supervisor. This obligation exists regardless of the state in which the employee was convicted. The conviction may be grounds for the employee's termination if there is a sufficient connection between the conviction and the employee's job responsibilities.

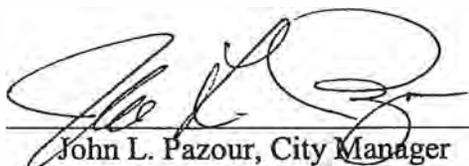
C. Weapons Prohibited

Possession, use or the threat of use of a weapon, including a firearm, is prohibited at City workplaces, in City vehicles and in the course of an employee's duties for the City unless specifically authorized. These prohibitions also apply to City employees who use their personal vehicles in the course of their duties. An employee who possesses, uses or threatens to use a weapon in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. City employees who are authorized to carry and use weapons in the course of their employment for the City are exempt from this provision.

For purposes of this policy, "weapon" means any item made or intended to cause serious injury or death.

D. Post-employment Interviews

Any employee who is terminated, or who resigns in lieu of termination, will be scheduled by their department for an exit interview with the Department of Human Resources. The exit interview will be scheduled to take place during the last week of employment.



John L. Pazour, City Manager

9/27/01

Date