

PREVENTION OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

1. PURPOSE

This Directive:

- a. States AMS policy and outlines responsibilities for the prevention of workplace violence.
- b. Outlines procedures to be followed when incidents of workplace violence occur.
- c. Addresses policies and procedures related to the assault of, or forcible interference with, AMS employees in the performance of their official duties.
- d. Identifies procedures for managing violent incidents.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This Directive replaces AMS Directive 4790.1, *Prevention of Workplace Violence, Including Assaults or Intimidation of AMS Employees*, dated 10/24/00. It also incorporates responsibilities of the Agency and supervisors in helping the victims of workplace violence cope with a violent event.

3. AUTHORITIES

- a. Departmental Regulation 4200-001, Workplace Violence Prevention Program, dated 5/31/00.
- b. The USDA Handbook on Workplace Violence Prevention and Response, dated 12/98, revised 2/99.
- c. Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 111, Assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers or employees.
- d. Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1114, Protection of officers and employees of the United States.

4. POLICY

- a. Workplace violence can be any act of physical violence, threats of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening, disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site. Workplace violence can affect or involve not only employees, but also visitors, contractors, clients, customers, and other non-Federal employees. AMS does not tolerate violence of any kind, such as aggression, threats, or intimidating, belligerent or disruptive behavior. Such acts of violence may be cause for disciplinary action or possible criminal charges.
- b. AMS has programs available to assist employees and supervisors in dealing with employees who display potentially violent behavior; to assist victims of a violent act; and to assist in managing stress of employees who witness violent or disruptive behavior in the workplace.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Employees.
 - (1) Any employee who genuinely believes that he or she is in danger must remove him or herself from harm's way, even if it means leaving the work site, and immediately report the danger to his or her supervisor and appropriate law enforcement authorities. The information in Attachment 1 provides tips on how to temporarily deal with dangerous situations until the employee who is being threatened can get to a safe location.
 - (2) Any employees, especially supervisors, who observe a situation where a person at the workplace has demonstrated warning signs of potential violence, should report it to their supervisor. Attachment 2 provides some warning signs of potentially violent behavior.
 - (3) All employees, while engaged in the performance of official duties or as a result of their official duties, shall immediately report to their supervisor all incidents involving bodily harm, an attempt to cause bodily harm, or the threat of bodily harm to the employee, by a co-worker, or by a customer, applicant or other non-Government employee. Reportable incidents include:
 - (a) Harassment, verbal threats, property damage, or any other action which can be interpreted as an intention or attempt to intimidate or interfere with the employee's performance of his or her duties; or,
 - (b) A series of seemingly minor offenses that appear to be a pattern of interference with the employee's performance of duties.

- (4) All employees shall complete the applicable sections of Attachment 3 and keep the document readily available.
- (5) All employees, including supervisors, should be aware of the various assistance programs available to AMS employees who are exposed to a workplace violence incident. Assistance programs available to AMS employees are listed in Section 6.

b. Supervisors.

- (1) Supervisors shall take all threats seriously, and should respond to potential threats and escalating negative behavior situations.
- (2) Supervisors are required to report all situations of actual workplace violence, threats of violence, or reports of potential violence (as discussed in paragraph 5. a. (3)) to the Employee Relations Branch, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, and to the AMS Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator.
- (3) Supervisors shall:
 - (a) In any incident in which the employee has been assaulted or injured, ensure that the employee receives medical treatment and that law enforcement officials are notified;
 - (b) If appropriate, intervene on the employee's behalf to resolve the situation;
 - (c) Initiate action to suspend AMS services, if appropriate;
 - (d) In any incident involving property damage, ensure that law enforcement officials are notified; if the damage is to the employee's personal property, advise the employee of the remedies available under the Federal Tort Claims Act; and
 - (e) Be responsive to the needs of AMS employees who have been the victims of a workplace violence incident.
- (4) Supervisors shall be familiar with the formal assistance programs available to them in the event employees in their areas of responsibility are exposed to workplace violence or a threat of violence. Assistance programs available to AMS are listed in Section 6.

- (5) Supervisors have an obligation to deal with inappropriate behavior by their employees and customers and to put effective workplace security measures in place.

c. The Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator.

- (1) The Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator will give top priority to all reported incidents of workplace violence or threats of workplace violence, and will work with supervisors, the AMS Compliance Office, the USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Federal Protective Service, local law enforcement officials, or other resources as appropriate, to safeguard employees, protect Agency resources, conduct any needed investigations, and to assist in ensuring the appropriate administrative or criminal action is initiated, as warranted.
- (2) The Coordinator shall work with the Employee Relations Branch, supervisors, and others as needed, to effect corrective action with employees who fail to behave professionally and who have either become violent or have behaved in a threatening, intimidating, or belligerent manner in the workplace.
- (3) The Coordinator shall provide training to supervisors and employees to ensure they are familiar with:
 - (a) The Agency's workplace violence prevention policy;
 - (b) Procedures for dealing with a hostile employee or customer;
 - (c) Techniques for defusing volatile situations and aggressive behavior; and
 - (d) The formal counseling and assistance programs available as outlined in Section 6.

6. ASSISTANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

AMS Offers a Variety of Assistance Programs.

- a. The assistance programs offered can help employees and supervisors deal with incidents of workplace violence or potential workplace violence. The programs can help:
 - (1) Employees who think they may become violent at work due to personal and/or family obligations;

- (2) Supervisors who are dealing with an employee who is demonstrating intimidating or disruptive behavior;
- (3) Employees who have been subject to a work environment with coworkers or customers who show aggressive or threatening behavior;
- (4) Supervisors and employees who may have a potentially explosive working relationship;
- (5) Supervisors and employees who have been exposed to a workplace violence situation and need help coping with the event;
- (6) Supervisors and employees who desire assistance in dealing with a coworker who is a victim of workplace violence; and
- (7) Any AMS employee who has a personal or job-related problem.

b. Services Provided.

- (1) Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP is a service with a flexible range of options to help all employees and their families balance personal and workplace responsibilities at every stage of life. The program offers confidential information, referrals to qualified resources, and consultative services for employees. Counselors are also available to provide consultation and guidance to supervisors and labor representatives to assist in constructively confronting employees regarding job performance, attendance, and/or behavioral problems, and in referring employees for assistance. EAP is confidential and is available 24 hours a day. **Telephone 800-222-0364; telephone for the hearing impaired 882-262-7848; Web site address is www.foh.dhhs.gov**
- (2) AMS Alternative Resolution (AR). AR is an employee-designed resource for resolving workplace conflicts at an early stage, before they turn into grievances, personnel actions or complaints. AR can assist in facilitated discussions, mediation and conflict management coaching. The service is confidential. **Telephone 866-227-0328; email address is AMS-ar@usda.gov**
- (3) AMS Victim Advocacy Response System (VARs). VARs is a program that was developed to assist AMS employees during critical incident stress situations. VARs will respond to AMS employees who experience critical situations and will provide appropriate support in dealing with a traumatizing event. VARs will deal directly with the employee to help the employee cope with the specific violent event. The Victim Advocate does not intervene in the workplace--they are a tool for the employee.

Supervisors can also request input from the Victim Advocate. **Telephone 866-227-0328; email address is AMS-ar@usda.gov.**

- (4) AMS WorkLife Program. WorkLife4You is an employee benefit provided by AMS, which offers counseling, education and referrals that can help employees better manage their personal and work-related responsibilities. WorkLife4You can assist with personal issues such as family (adoption, prenatal care, child care, aging loved ones, etc.); health and wellness (diet/nutrition, fitness programs, children's, men's and women's health, etc.); education (preschools, elementary/secondary schools, special education, colleges, financial aid, etc.); financial and legal (credit/debt, insurance, retirement/estate planning, wills, etc.); and daily life (automotive services, home improvement, moving, pet care, special events, travel, etc.). WorkLife4You is confidential and available 24 hours a day. **Telephone 800-222-0364; telephone for the hearing impaired 888-262-7848; Web site is www.worklife4you.com.**

/s/

Lloyd C. Day
Administrator

TIPS FOR COPING WITH THREATS OR VIOLENCE

Coping with a person who is angry or hostile:

- Stay calm.
- Listen attentively.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Be courteous.
- Be patient.
- Keep the situation in your control.

Coping with a person who is shouting, swearing or threatening:

- Signal a coworker or supervisor that you need help.
- Have someone call 911, local police, the Federal Protective Service (FPS), or contact a guard (internal security).

Coping with a person who is threatening you with a gun, knife, or other weapon:

- Stay calm.
- Quietly signal for help, if possible.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Stall for time.
- Keep talking, but follow the instructions from the person who has the weapon.
- Don't risk harm to yourself or others and don't ever try to be a hero.
- Never try to grab the weapon.
- Watch for a safe chance to escape to a safe area.

WARNING SIGNS OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE

- Direct or indirect threats of harm (whether made at work, at home, in person, through letters, telephone calls, or electronic mail).
- Intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying, stalking, or other inappropriate and aggressive behavior.
- Physical assault.
- Physically aggressive acts, such as shaking fists at another person, kicking, pounding on desks, punching a wall, angrily jumping up and down, screaming at others.
- Throwing or striking objects and/or damaging, destroying, or sabotaging property.
- Numerous conflicts with supervisors or other employees.
- Bringing a weapon to the workplace, brandishing a weapon in the workplace, making inappropriate references to guns, or a fascination with weapons.
- Statements showing a fascination with incidents of workplace violence, statements indicating approval of the use of violence to resolve a problem, or statements indicating identification with perpetrators or workplace homicides.
- Statements indicating desperation (over family, financial, and other personal problems) to the point of contemplating suicide.
- Verbal abuse including offensive, profane, and vulgar language.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- Extreme changes in behaviors.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NOTE: Complete the following information to fit your location. Keep a copy of the completed document near telephones, in government owned vehicles, etc.

Local Authority: Police 911 or _____

Medical/Fire 911 or _____

Federal Protective Service: _____
 (Local number if you are in a Federal Building.)

Internal Security: _____

Immediate supervisor: _____

MRP Employee Relations Specialist: 202-720-5721	Employee Assistance Program (EAP): 800-222-0364 TTY 882-262-7848
AMS Workplace Violence Prevention Coordinator: 202-720-2374	AMS Alternative Resolution: 866-227-0328
AMS Compliance Office: 202-720-6766	AMS Victim Advocacy Response System: 866-227-0328
Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline: 800-424-9121	AMS WorkLife4You: 800-222-0364 TTY 882-262-7848
AMS Civil Rights Office: 202-720-0583	AMS Safety and Health Program Manager: 202-720-4352