

For: FSA, RMA, and FAS Employees, except Overseas Employees

Workplace Violence Prevention and Response (WVP&R) Program

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A Background

Workplace violence is a critical, complex problem facing Federal agencies and the private sector. The risk of violence, harm to others and/or self, can arise internally from any level of the workforce or externally from customers, contractors, vendors, and/or others. FFAS management, employees, unions, and employee associations, where applicable, can work to increase safety by recognizing and reporting acts or threats of violence, intimidation, harassment, and other behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the workplace. The goals of FFAS are early recognition, reporting, assessing, and developing appropriate response plans, by the appropriate parties, to prevent or reduce and manage the risk of workplace violence.

B Purpose

This notice provides the following WVP&R Program information:

- Web site for DR 4200-001, USDA Workplace Violence Prevention Program
- FFAS WVP&R Program policy
- OPM, USDA, and FFAS guidance on preventing or reducing the risk of workplace violence
- FFAS risk/threat assessment process
- sources of assistance for workplace violence emergencies and nonemergencies.

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1 Overview (Continued)

C Contact

Direct questions about this notice to Irene Seastrum, FFAS WVP&R Coordinator, by:

- telephone at 202-418-8963 or TDD at 202-418-9116 or
- FAX at 202-418-9119
- e-mail at **Irene.Seastrum@wdc.usda.gov**.

D Labor Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

2 Workplace Violence Regulation, Policy, Guidance, and Information

A USDA Regulation

DR 4200-001 may be accessed at
<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/files/dr/DR4200-001.htm>.

B FFAS Policy

This notice and DR 4200-001 should be posted in conspicuous locations throughout the workplace.

FFAS policy on WVP&R Program is as follows.

- FFAS is committed to working with employees to maintain a safe, supportive, civil, and productive work environment.
- Employees at every level of FFAS are expected to treat all USDA and FFAS employees, customers, contractors, visitors, and others in the workplace with respect and dignity.
- It is a violation of FFAS policy for employees or other individuals to engage in acts or threats of violence against persons or property, including acts of intimidation, harassment, or other inappropriate behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the workplace, or at any USDA-sponsored event on USDA owned or leased property.

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2 Workplace Violence Regulation, Policy, Guidance, and Information (Continued)

B FFAS Policy (Continued)

- It is prohibited for employees or other individuals to possess, use, or threaten use of a firearm, explosive, or other dangerous weapon at a USDA Government owned or leased workplace and/or at any site at which a USDA-sponsored event is held.

Note: See DR 4200-001 for coverage and exemptions.

- All employees are responsible for maintaining a safe work environment, and, as such, are encouraged to document and report incidents/situations that cause fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the workplace.
- Managers and supervisors will consider seriously reports of such behavior and promptly seek assistance/guidance from appropriate sources to evaluate the specifics of each incident/situation within its context and properly deal with it.

Note: See paragraph 3 and Exhibits 1, 2, and 3 for sources of assistance.

- Managers and supervisors are expected to use the FFAS risk/threat assessment process to obtain assistance in evaluating incidents/situations and in developing and implementing a response plan to prevent or reduce and manage the risk of violence.

Note: See paragraph 3 for the role of the FFAS risk/threat assessment process in WVP&R Program.

- In emergencies, where a serious, direct, or implied threat of violence has been made and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, employees are expected to:
 - exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
 - contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
 - notify management.

Note: See:

- Exhibits 1 and 2 for emergency contacts by location
- Exhibit 4 for coping with threats and violence.

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2 Workplace Violence Regulation, Policy, Guidance, and Information (Continued)

C Guidance

OPM Government-wide guidance for WVP&R includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners at <http://www.opm.gov/ehs/workplac/index.asp>
- A Manager's Guide: Handling Traumatic Events (February 2003) <http://www.opm.gov/ehs/pdf/trauma.pdf>
- Responding to Domestic Violence: Where Federal Employees Can Find Help at <http://www.opm.gov/ehs/workplac/html/domestic.asp>.

USDA guidance for WVP&R includes the following:

- the USDA Handbook on WVP&R at <http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/violence/wpv.htm>
- USDA Domestic Violence Awareness Handbook at <http://www.usda.gov/da/shmd/aware.htm>
- USDA 11-minute video on WVP&R.

Note: The WVP&R video was distributed in November 2001 to FFAS management, except overseas, with a cover memorandum from DAM, for viewing by all employees, supervisors, and managers.

- FFAS guidance for WVP&R includes the following:
 - CD-ROM training course entitled "FSA Workplace Violence Prevention Program: Dealing With External Customers" (This course requires a student 3.5 inch disk. The student retains their registration information and bookmark on the 3.5 inch disk.)

Note:This FSA-specific guidance was developed at the request of FSA DAFO.

- this notice at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dam/forms/prognotices.asp>

Note:Select "Personnel Management" from the "Subject" drop down menu.

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2 Workplace Violence Regulation, Policy, Guidance, and Information (Continued)

D Information

A list of web-based workplace violence information sources may be accessed at <http://hr.ffas.usda.gov/offices/violence/violence.htm>.

The WVP&R Coordinator is available to present group briefings/trainings by teleconference, and in some instances, in person. Topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- FFAS WVP&R Program
- administrative options and defusing techniques for dealing with hostile and/or disruptive customers
- how to talk to an employee exhibiting signs of distress and/or bizarre behavior
- briefing geared to the specifics of a situation--range of options for dealing with the situation, preventive and safety measures to take, and other related topics.

3 The Role of the FFAS Risk/Threat Assessment Process in WVP&R

A Purpose

The risk of workplace violence can be reduced by participation in the FFAS risk/threat assessment process. Both USDA and FFAS are committed to this process, the objective of which is to evaluate the credibility and seriousness of a threat and/or assess the potential risk to safety of a workplace situation that causes fear for personal safety. In this process, the FFAS WVP&R Coordinator, with input from qualified professionals and specialists, assists management in assessment, which includes among other things, identifying risk factors within the context and totality of the situation. Assistance is also provided in the development and implementation of a response plan to prevent or reduce and manage the risk of violence. This includes briefings on safety and options for dealing with the situation and the preparation of talking points and related correspondence, as needed.

The FFAS WVP&R Coordinator is also available to work with management to develop and carry out customized interventions. These interventions are designed to deal with employees/supervisors/managers who engage in intimidating and/or harassing behavior, talk of or talk of suicide and/or homicide, and other behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or the safety of others, and/or disruption in the work environment.

Note: People thinking about suicide often give hints about their intentions. Interventions can be planned to kindly but firmly question and clarify such talk. Through the respectful expression of concern and support, the Agency can act as a bridge to EAP and impact the individual's willingness to receive professional assistance.

In workplace violence cases involving external customers, the FFAS WVP&R Coordinator can assist management in developing action plans to implement reasonable safety measures and in preparing correspondence outlining the conditions under which future Agency business will be conducted.

3 The Role of the FFAS Risk/Threat Assessment Process in WVP&R (Continued)

B Participants

The FFAS risk/threat assessment process is usually conducted telephonically. This process may be coordinated at the National (Headquarters) or local level (Field Offices). Participants in the risk/threat assessment process may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- supervisors and managers
- designated individuals and/or officials
- FFAS WVP&R Coordinator (has access to behavioral science professionals)
- local security, local and/or State law enforcement, and/or Federal Protective Service (FPS) personnel
- USDA OIG Regional Office Special Agent
- USDA OGC Regional Office Attorney
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) consultant
- FSA Employee Relations Specialist
- other professionals or specialists, as needed.

C Who Can Request a Risk/Threat Assessment

Any employee at any level of FFAS may request a risk/threat assessment through a supervisor, anyone in management, a representative, or by directly contacting Irene Seastrum, FFAS WVP&R Coordinator, at 202-418-8963 or TDD at 202-418-9116 or TDD 711 (dialed on outside line like 911).

D FSA DAFO Notification

Managers and supervisors shall promptly contact SED, or designee, when a risk/threat assessment is being conducted. SED, or designee, shall promptly notify DAFO at the National Office and provide information about the nature of the incident/situation, involvement of Federal and/or county system employees, customers, their location, and measures taken.

E Privacy

In the FFAS risk/threat assessment process and the development and implementation of a response plan, the privacy interests of the accused individual are balanced with the Agency's safety interests. No absolute guarantee to privacy can be made.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence

A Employee Awareness

The risk of workplace violence can be reduced through employee awareness of the following:

- What is violence?
- What are indicators of an increased possibility of violent behavior?
- What is a violence emergency that requires immediate assistance?
- What may appear to be a nonemergency that should not be ignored?

B Recognize Violence

Violence encompasses acts or threats of physical violence against persons or property. It also includes acts of intimidation, harassment, or other inappropriate behavior that causes fear for personal safety and/or disruption in the workplace. Recognizing that violence is a process, as well as an act, can reduce the risk of becoming a victim. Violence is often the culmination of long-developing and identifiable problems, conflicts, and failure. The risk of violent behavior can increase when a set of conditions and factors are present. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the individual's behavior, personality, and thinking style
- life stressors impacting the individual
- a triggering event or condition that leads the individual to see violence as an option or solution
- a setting that facilitates or permits the violence, or at least does not attempt to stop it from occurring.

Important: The reactions and decisions of employees and managers to either ignore or use appropriate sources of assistance to deal with threatening or violent behavior can play a vital role in resolving the problem.

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

C Recognize Victims of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in which an intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, and emotional, sexual, or economic abuse to control the other partner in the relationship. Workplace violence incidents can stem from a domestic abusive relationship. Indicators of possible victimization include, but are not limited to, the following:

- unexplained bruises or injuries
- inappropriate attire, such as wearing sunglasses inside the building or a turtleneck and long sleeves in the summer
- disruptive visits, telephone calls, and/or e-mails from current or former intimate partners.

Notes: Victims of domestic abuse, even if not ready to leave the abuser, may contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) and TDD at 1-800-787-3224, to obtain information that may increase their safety and that of their family and co-workers. See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts, including EAP.

Concern about an employee or co-worker being a victim of domestic violence may be discussed with an alternate contact, including EAP. See Exhibit 3.

D Recognize Risk Factors

Risk factors are indicators that point to an increased possibility of violent behavior. A number of risk factors can be present without automatically indicating a potential for violence. To plan and implement an appropriate response, risk factors must be evaluated on their own merits, within the context and totality of a situation.

The FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime has identified the following as indicators of increased risk:

- intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying, or other inappropriate and aggressive behavior
- numerous conflicts with supervisors and other employees
- bringing and/or brandishing a weapon in the workplace, making inappropriate references to guns, and/or exhibiting a fascination with weapons

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

D Recognize Risk Factors (Continued)

- making statements that show a fascination with incidents of workplace violence, that indicate approval of using violence to resolve a problem, or that indicate identification with perpetrators of workplace homicides
- making statements that indicate desperation over family, financial, or other personal problems to the point of contemplating suicide
- engaging in drug/alcohol abuse
- exhibiting extreme changes in behavior.

Note: A list of risk factors compiled by FFAS may be accessed at <http://hr.ffas.usda.gov/offices/violence/info3.htm>.

E Recognize an Emergency

An emergency is a critical incident in which a serious, direct or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress. In these situations employees are expected to:

- exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
- contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
- contact management.

Examples of emergencies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- display or actual use of firearms or other weapons with intent to harm
- attempted or actual homicide and/or suicide
- severe destruction of property
- angry, disruptive rampage, such as shouting, kicking furniture or doors, punching the wall, and/or throwing objects
- direct threat.

Note: A direct threat identifies a specific act against a specific target, is readily understandable, and leaves little room for misunderstanding the perpetrator's intent, such as, "I am going out to my car to get my pistol and take care of you!"

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

F Prepare for an Emergency

Managers and supervisors shall:

- verify which local law enforcement agency is responsible for responding to an emergency, for example, the sheriff's or police department, or FPS
- provide emergency contact telephone numbers to employees
- ensure that an emergency evacuation plan is in place
- communicate the evacuation plan to all employees
- conduct periodic drills.

Employees, in turn, are responsible for becoming familiar with the evacuation plan. However, the reality is that human behavior is unpredictable, and the dynamics of every violent situation are different. Depending on the circumstances, following an established evacuation plan may increase risk to safety. Instead, it may be necessary to find another way to escape to a safe area.

Important: Offices are encouraged to hold discussions about the physical layout of the worksite and options for increasing safety, such as installing a duress alarm or implementing controlled access to the office. A request may be made to local law enforcement authorities (police or sheriff's department) to conduct a physical security walk-through of the premises. They may make recommendations for improving security and for conducting a safe evacuation, in the event of a workplace violence incident.

G Recognize a Nonemergency

In a nonemergency, employees may observe behavior that causes apprehension or fear for personal safety, but no immediate harm or risk to safety is apparent. It is best for employees to act on the side of safety and discuss their concerns with a supervisor or the contact of their choice. See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts for nationwide nonemergencies.

Depending on the circumstances, nonemergencies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- talk of guns or other weapons that is perceived as intimidating
- veiled or nonspecific reference to homicide, suicide, or other violence that causes apprehension and/or fear

4 How to Reduce the Risk of Workplace Violence (Continued)

G Recognize a Nonemergency (Continued)

- indirect threat

Note: An indirect threat tends to be vague, unclear, and ambiguous; does not specify that an act will take place; designed more to intimidate and instill fear, such as, “If I wanted to, I could blast everyone in this office!”

- veiled threat

Note: A veiled threat strongly implies but does not explicitly threaten violence, such as, “You had better watch your back!”

- aggressive, angry outburst that causes apprehension and/or disruption, but does not immediately threaten physical safety
- nonverbal, menacing gestures

Note: Nonverbal, menacing gestures may include intimidating body language, such as slashing a hand across the throat or using a finger pointed like a gun to signify that someone will be dead soon. Depending on the circumstances, this may also include displaying items related to weapons to instill fear, for example, empty shell casings or a paper target (silhouette) with an individual’s name on it.

- any intimidating, bullying, harassing, and/or other inappropriate behavior that causes fear for personal safety.

Important: Individuals utter threats for many reasons, only some of which involve intention or capacity to commit a violent act. However, an individual can present a grave threat without articulating it. The distinction between making and posing a threat is important.

- Some individuals who make threats ultimately pose a threat to safety.
- Many individuals who make threats do not pose a threat to safety.
- Some individuals who pose a threat to safety never make threats.

Ignoring behavior that causes fear for personal safety because a direct threat has not been articulated may hinder management’s ability to review and address a matter that may potentially impact employee safety.

5 Sources of Assistance for Emergencies

A Emergencies Within the Washington Metropolitan Area

For emergencies at the South, Whitten, and Cotton Annex Building Complex, and USDA satellite locations, where a serious, direct or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, employees are expected to do the following:

- exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
- contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
- notify management.

See:

- Exhibit 1 for emergency contacts within the Washington Metropolitan area
- Exhibit 4 for coping with threats and violence.

B Emergencies at Field Offices, Except Overseas

Managers and supervisors at USDA **Field Offices** are responsible for verifying which local law enforcement agency is responsible for responding to an emergency, for example, sheriff's or police department or FPS, and for providing employees written notification of this information.

For emergencies, where a serious, direct, or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, employees are expected to do the following:

- exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
- contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
- notify management.

See:

- Exhibit 2 for emergency contacts
- Exhibit 4 for coping with threats and violence.

C USDA OIG Notification and Role in Emergencies

Nationwide, after local law enforcement personnel or FPS is contacted, following established local and national protocol, management should notify the local USDA OIG Regional Office as soon as possible. At the National Office (Headquarters), notification should be made to the Northeast OIG Regional Office at 301-504-2000. For telephone numbers of other OIG Regional Offices, see <http://www.usda.gov/oig/investigative.htm> (TDD relay service can be obtained from any location by calling 711, dialed on outside line like 911. When operator answers, the caller must provide the telephone number he/she is attempting to reach.) It should be noted that **OIG is not an emergency response agency**. In an actual or potentially serious workplace violence situation, local law enforcement personnel should be notified first; however, OIG can assist in the FFAS risk/threat assessment process and provide liaison and assistance to local law enforcement personnel. OIG may make a determination to investigate an incident or situation if it meets prosecutorial guidelines.

5 Sources of Assistance for Emergencies (Continued)

D FFAS Assistance

The FFAS WVP&R and Employee Assistance Program Coordinators provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

6 Sources of Assistance for Nonemergencies

A Nonemergencies

In a workplace violence nonemergency, an individual may be observed engaging in behavior that causes apprehension or fear, but no immediate risk to safety is readily apparent. For example, nonemergencies may include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

- an individual makes a veiled reference to suicide
- an employee increasingly talks about “getting even” with his supervisor
- a supervisor increasingly overreacts with anger towards subordinates.

This behavior may cause disruption in the workplace, and if ignored, may increasingly impact employee morale and/or escalate to the point where it may pose an actual risk to safety. See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts for nationwide nonemergencies.

B Contacts for Nonemergencies Nationwide

Managers and supervisors are responsible for providing contact telephone numbers to employees for assistance with workplace violence. In certain situations, an employee may want to discuss a nonemergency with an alternate source of assistance before informing management. FFAS supports this flexibility to go outside the traditional management chain to request assistance, without fear of or experiencing retaliation. However, management bears the final responsibility for dealing with conduct issues, and management’s ability to timely reduce any potential risk to safety may be diminished or hindered if not timely notified and involved. See Exhibit 3 for alternate contacts for nonemergencies nationwide.

Emergency Contacts for Locations Within the Washington Metropolitan Area

For emergencies, where a serious, direct or implied threat of violence has been made, and/or violence appears imminent or is in progress, the sources of assistance are listed below.

- **South, Whitten, and Cotton Annex Building Complex**

Important: TDD relay service can be obtained from any location by calling 711 (dialed on outside line like 911). When operator answers, the caller must provide the telephone number he/she is attempting to reach.

- Contact the USDA Security Control Center at 202-690-0869 or TDD at 202-720-8476 for assistance from USDA Special Police Officers.

Notes: USDA Special Police Officers are commissioned with police powers by the District of Columbia. The USDA Security Control Center can also obtain assistance from FPS, if needed. Per USDA Security, FPS should **never** be contacted from the South, Whitten, and Cotton Annex Building Complex without prior notification of the USDA Security Control Center at 202-690-0869 or TDD at 202-720-8476.

If contact is made with FPS at 202-708-1111 or TDD at 301-763-0126, or the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) at 911, notification must be made as soon as possible to management and the USDA Security Control Center at 202-690-0869 or TDD at 202-720-8476, open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, or the USDA Protective Operations Branch at 202-720-6270.

For individuals who must use the TDD system, if it is not possible to get through calling the USDA Security Control Center at TDD at 202-720-8476, then call FPS directly at TDD at 301-763-0126. Provide specific information about the location of the emergency, for example, "USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., South Building, Room 3091."

- **USDA Satellite Locations Within the Washington Metropolitan Area**

- Contact FPS at 202-708-1111 or TDD at 301-763-0126, and MPD at 911, have concurrent jurisdiction at **all** USDA satellite locations, which means that either agency can be called to respond to an emergency.
- In severe cases of violence, call 911 for assistance; otherwise, contact FPS at 202-708-1111 or TDD at 301-763-0126.

Note: OIG is not an emergency response agency. See subparagraph 5 D.

The FFAS WVP&R and Employee Assistance Program Coordinators provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

Emergency Contacts for Field Offices, Except Overseas

Important: TDD relay service can be obtained from any location by calling 711 (dialed on outside line like 911). When operator answers, the caller must provide the telephone number he/she is attempting to reach.

- **Offices Under the GSA Umbrella**

FPS and local law enforcement personnel often have concurrent jurisdiction. This means that either agency can be called to respond to an emergency. However, in an emergency, employees should immediately call 911 from any USDA site, since local law enforcement personnel are usually able to respond more quickly. If local law enforcement personnel are called, management should follow up by notifying FPS and the local USDA OIG Regional Office, following established local and national protocol.

- **Privately Leased Space, Not Under the GSA Umbrella**

Local law enforcement personnel have jurisdiction. Employees should call 911 for assistance.

Note: In some jurisdictions, law enforcement personnel have a different emergency number other than 911. This information should be verified by supervisors/managers and provided in writing to employees.

The FFAS WVP&R and Employee Assistance Program Coordinators are available to provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

Alternate Contacts for Nonemergencies

In certain situations, an employee may want to discuss a nonemergency with an alternate source of assistance before informing management. FFAS supports this flexibility to go outside the traditional management chain to request assistance, without fear of or experiencing retaliation. However, management bears the final responsibility for dealing with conduct issues, and management's ability to timely reduce any potential risk to safety may be diminished or hindered if not timely notified and involved.

Note: Relay service telephone numbers for FSA, HRD are as follows:

- Washington, DC, at TDD at 202-418-9116, 202-855-1234
- Kansas City, MO, at TDD at 800-735-2466.

For FAS Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office, Washington, DC, TDD at 202-720-1786.

Important: TDD relay service can be obtained from any location by calling 711 (dialed on outside line like 911). When operator answers, the caller must provide the telephone number he/she is attempting to reach.

Alternate contacts for nonemergencies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- designated individuals and/or officials in the management chain
- Irene Seastrum, FFAS WVP&R Coordinator, by:
 - telephone at 202-418-8963
 - FAX at 202-418-9119
 - e-mail at Irene.Seastrum@wdc.usda.gov
- Servicing Employee Relations Specialist or Branch Chief:
 - Washington, DC, at 202-418-8961
 - Kansas City, MO, at 816-926-6643
- Juliet McBride, FFAS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Coordinator, at 202-418-9029
- EAP provider

Note: A list of EAP providers, according to Agency and geographical location, may be accessed at http://hr.ffas.usda.gov/offices/pmba/eap_contacts.htm.

- **FSA/RMA** ADR Program contact at 202-418-9091; alternative RMA contact at 202-690-3190
- Mae Clark Johnson, **FAS** ADR Program Manager at 202-720-7233

Alternate Contacts for Nonemergencies (Continued)

- local security and/or law enforcement personnel, or FPS (depending on the jurisdiction), contacted through the **nonemergency** telephone number

Note: At the National Office (Headquarters), in the South, Whitten, and Cotton Annex Building Complex, alternate contacts for nonemergencies include the USDA Security Control Center (USDA Special Police Officers) at 202-690-0869 or TDD at 202-720-8476, open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, or the USDA Protective Operations Branch at 202-720-6270.

- union and/or association representative (if applicable).

The FFAS WVP&R and Employee Assistance Program Coordinators are available to provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.

Coping With Threats and Violence

In a situation with:

- **an angry or hostile customer or co-worker:**
 - stay calm and listen attentively
 - maintain eye contact
 - be courteous and patient
 - keep the situation in your control

- **a person shouting, swearing, and threatening:**
 - signal a coworker or supervisor that you need help
Note: Use a prearranged code word or duress alarm system.
 - do not make any calls yourself
 - have someone call local security or law enforcement personnel (FPS, or sheriff's or police department, depending on the jurisdiction)

- **for someone threatening you with a gun, knife, or other weapon:**
 - stay calm and quietly signal for help
Note: Use a prearranged code word or a duress alarm system.
 - maintain eye contact
 - stall for time
 - keep talking but follow instructions from the person who has the weapon
 - do not risk harm to yourself or others
 - never try to grab a weapon
 - watch for a safe chance to escape to a safe area.

Note: The above guidance is provided by FPS.

Coping With Threats and Violence (Continued)

Keep in mind that:

- human behavior is unpredictable, and the dynamics of every violent situation are different
- in a workplace emergency, where serious violence appears imminent or is in progress, there is no “one-size-fits-all” response plan
- an action that may defuse a particular situation might escalate another.

Therefore, employees are expected to:

- exercise their best judgment in taking steps to ensure their personal safety
- then contact local security and/or law enforcement personnel for assistance
- then notify management.

After the Incident

Do not disturb any area or damaged property (personal or government) that was involved in a serious threat, assault, or other act of violence. Local law enforcement personnel, FPS, USDA, OIG Special Agent, or another investigator, may need to collect valuable evidence from the scene to conduct a successful investigation.

Once law enforcement personnel (FPS, or sheriff’s or police department, depending on the jurisdiction) are contacted about threats, assaults, or any serious workplace violence incident/situation, following local management’s and National Office protocol, notification should be made to the **local** OIG Regional Office as soon as possible.

Notes: At the National Office, management should notify the USDA OIG Beltsville Mid-Atlantic Regional Office at 301-504-2000.

OIG is not an emergency response agency. In an actual or potentially serious workplace violence situation, local security and/or law enforcement personnel or FPS should be notified first. However, OIG can assist in the FFAS risk/threat assessment process and provide liaison and assistance to local law enforcement personnel. In some cases, OIG may make a determination to investigate an incident or situation if it meets prosecutorial guidelines.

The FFAS WVP&R and Employee Assistance Program Coordinators are available to provide support and assistance in workplace violence situations nationwide.