



Threat Assessment Team Guide

Publication 108

May 2002
Transmittal Letter 2

- A. Explanation.** Publication 108, *Threat Assessment Team Guide*, provides guidance to postal management in responding to and assessing the seriousness of violent and potentially violent situations. This full revision incorporates the position responsibilities of the workplace improvement analyst as a situational advisor on the Threat Assessment Team.
- B. Distribution**
- 1. Initial.** Copies are to be sent to each performance cluster for distribution to appropriate offices and plants.
 - 2. Additional Copies.** Order additional copies from the Material Distribution Center (MDC) using Form 7380, *MDC Supply Requisition*. Users of the Touch Tone Order Entry may order by entering PSN 7610-04-000-0991.
- C. Rescission.** This document supercedes Publication 108, *Threat Assessment Team Guide*, dated May 1997. Recycle all copies of the superceded document and replace with this full revision.
- D. Comments.** Submit questions and suggestions in writing to:
- WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENT
US POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW RM 9801
WASHINGTON DC 20260-4230
- E. Effective Date.** This handbook is effective upon receipt.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. [unclear]".

Contents

Chapters	Page
1 Workplace Violence Prevention	1
1-1 Workplace Violence Prevention Program	1
1-1.1 Zero Tolerance Policy and Action Plan	1
1-1.2 Violence Prevention Strategies	2
1-2 Threat Assessment Team	2
2 Team Purpose and Objectives	5
2-1 Mission Statement	5
2-2 Purpose	5
2-3 Goals	5
2-4 Means to Achieve Goals	6
2-5 Three Primary Tasks	6
2-6 Paramount Considerations	7
3 Establishing a Threat Assessment Team	9
3-1 Threat Assessment Team Composition	9
3-1.1 Core Membership	9
3-1.2 Core Member Responsibilities	9
3-1.3 Situational Advisors	11
3-1.4 Situational Advisor Responsibilities	11
3-1.5 Ad Hoc Resources	12
3-1.6 Ad Hoc Resource Responsibilities	13
3-1.7 Criteria for Selecting Ad Hoc Resources	15
3-2 Threat Assessment Team Orientation	16
4 Team Process	17
4-1 Meetings and Minutes	17
4-2 Incident Response	18
5 Team Performance Measures	21
6 Employee Education and Communication	23
6-1 Information Is Prevention	23
6-2 Supervisor and Manager Training	23

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Exhibits

Exhibit 1-1.1a	
Sample Zero Tolerance Policy Statement 1	25
Exhibit 1-1.1b	
Sample Zero Tolerance Policy Statement 2	26
Exhibit 1-1.1c	
Sample Action Plan for Threats and Assaults	27
Exhibit 2-6a	
Risk Indicators	31
Exhibit 2-6b	
Environmental and Societal Factors and Contributing Events	32
Exhibit 3-1.2	
Priority Risk Scale	33
Exhibit 5a	
Sample Threat Assessment Team Survey	36
Exhibit 5b	
Threat Assessment Team Data Entry Template	38
Glossary	39

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1

Workplace Violence Prevention

1-1 Workplace Violence Prevention Program

A viable Workplace Violence Prevention Program is the first step in helping to ensure a violence-free workplace. Such a program depends on a universal *zero tolerance policy statement* and a consistently implemented *zero tolerance action plan* for the management of threats, assaults, and other inappropriate workplace behavior. Ultimately, the most effective way to respond to the growing problem of workplace violence is to develop strategies to prevent it.

1-1.1 Zero Tolerance Policy and Action Plan

Zero tolerance means that each and every act or threat of violence, regardless of the initiator, elicits an immediate and firm response, which could involve discipline up to and including removal of the offenders.

Zero tolerance is based on the belief that no employee should have to work in the atmosphere of fear and intimidation that results when threats and inappropriate behavior remain unaddressed. All employees deserve a safe work environment. Zero tolerance, thus, is the most important feature of a performance cluster's commitment and resolve to provide a violence-free workplace.

By implementing a zero tolerance policy statement, we are reaffirming the objectives of the *Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace*. See Exhibit 1-1.1a and Exhibit 1-1.1b for two sample zero tolerance policy statements.

The issuance of an action plan for postal management to deal with acts of workplace violence is essential. See Exhibit 1-1.1c for a sample action plan for threats and assaults that outlines managerial obligations when they need to respond immediately.

1-1.2 Violence Prevention Strategies

The six organizational strategies for reducing workplace violence are the following:

- *Selection:* Hire the right individuals for the right job in the first place.
- *Security:* Ensure appropriate safeguards for employees, customers, and property.
- *Communication of policy:* Consistently communicate and enforce postal policy regarding violent and inappropriate behavior.
- *Environment and culture:* Create a work setting and maintain an atmosphere perceived to be fair and free from unlawful and inappropriate behavior.
- *Employee support:* Ensure that managers, supervisors, and employees are aware of the resources available to assist them in dealing with the problems of work and daily living.
- *Separation:* When separation is necessary, handle the process professionally, including assessing inappropriate behavior and potentially violent circumstances. See Publication 106, *Guide to Professional Parting*, for details on handling separations.

1-2 Threat Assessment Team

The use of a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) is a cross-functional, multidisciplinary team approach to assist in assessing threatening situations and developing risk abatement plans that minimize the potential risk for violence. The TAT is another component of the Postal Service's comprehensive Workplace Violence Prevention Program and must be implemented in each performance cluster.

This document outlines the TAT guidelines that all performance clusters are to implement. These guidelines outline orientation and performance measurements and include a *Threat Assessment Team Survey* to be used by each performance cluster's TAT. See the glossary at the back of the book for definitions used throughout.

The guidelines in this document are provided to ensure consistency throughout the Postal Service and to further enhance the development of existing TATs.

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2

Team Purpose and Objectives

2-1 Mission Statement

The mission of the TAT is to prevent workplace violence.

2-2 Purpose

The TAT assesses the danger or harm that may result from a threat, both to the victim and to others affected. The TAT recommends an appropriate risk abatement plan.

2-3 Goals

The goals of the TAT are to:

- Identify threateners (individuals who have shown signs of violence toward others in the workplace or themselves and/or have committed acts of physical violence).
- Assess the risk posed by the overall circumstances of the threats.
- Manage the case to reduce risk to employees, customers, and the organization.
- Contribute toward a safe workplace for every employee.
- Help reduce incidences of inappropriate behavior and resolve conflicts.

2-4 Means to Achieve Goals

To achieve these goals, the TAT must be prepared to:

- Respond quickly to incidents that may endanger employees and customers or disrupt the workplace.
- Support management personnel as well as union and management organizations in handling difficult situations.
- Act as a resource and offer support, including information and recommendations.
- Act in the best interest of the Postal Service and our employees.
- Follow up the incident to ensure that the threat is mitigated.
- Identify proactive strategies and mechanisms to maintain a safer workplace.

The TAT addresses issues defined within the scope of the Postal Service definitions of *violence* and *credible threat* (see the glossary at the end of the book).

2-5 Three Primary Tasks

The three primary tasks of the TAT are to:

- *Identify threateners*: The TAT must identify the threateners, as well as the environmental and societal factors and contributing events, in a situation.
- *Assess risk*: The TAT must assess the risk level of a situation or incident.
- *Recommend a risk abatement plan*: The TAT must develop a recommended risk abatement plan, with a primary focus on reducing risk and liability, for managing an identified situation or incident.

2-6 Paramount Considerations

TAT members are responsible for being careful and diligent in guarding the individual's civil and legal rights. TAT members must evaluate workplace environment issues and/or risk indicators that may escalate the potential for violence. See Exhibit 2-6a for risk indicators and Exhibit 2-6b for environmental and societal factors — additional factors that are provided to remind TAT members that *final assessment and planning are not accomplished until all relevant factors and events that contribute to the potential for violence are examined.*

When appropriate, the TAT alerts the crisis manager to the potential for or serious nature of the incident. For more information, refer to your local Crisis Management Plan and the forthcoming Publication 107, *Crisis Management Planning Guide.*

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3

Establishing a Threat Assessment Team

3-1 Threat Assessment Team Composition

3-1.1 Core Membership

Core members of the TAT are:

- Human Resources manager or designee.
- Labor Relations manager.
- Medical director or occupational health nurse administrator (OHNA).
- District manager or designee.
- Lead plant manager or designee.

3-1.2 Core Member Responsibilities

Core team members of the TAT normally address incidents of extreme or high priority risk (see the Priority Risk Scale in Exhibit 3-1.2). All core members should become subject matter experts in the area of workplace violence. They have both a specialist and a generalist role. All core members must complete the Threat Assessment Team Orientation course number 22301-00.

Human Resources manager or designee actions include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating and overseeing the TAT.
- Determining whether or not to convene the TAT.
- Determining whether or not ad hoc resources are to be used.

- Assigning TAT member duties and monitoring core team assignments.
- Determining what outside resources are needed and who is to contact them.
- Determining who is to prepare and maintain official records for the TAT.

Labor Relations manager actions include, but are not limited to:

- Providing guidance on placing an employee on emergency, off-duty status.
- Serving as a resource to supervisors or managers on administrative and/or disciplinary actions.
- Reviewing an employee's past disciplinary record.
- Communicating to the TAT relevant information regarding contractual issues.

Medical director or OHNA actions include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing an employee's medical records: Department of Veterans Affairs medical information, fitness for duty (FFD), and current medical history.
- Contacting an employee's private treating physician.
- Providing specific employee medical information to the TAT on a need-to-know basis.
- Scheduling an FFD examination when warranted.

Operations representative (district manager, lead plant manager, or designees) actions include, but are not limited to:

- Providing knowledge on how to minimize the disruption of worksite operations.
- Providing information about security needs.

3-1.3 Situational Advisors

Situational advisors include:

- Postal inspector.
- Postal Service legal counsel.
- Workplace improvement analyst.
- EAP consultant.
- Outside mental health professional.

3-1.4 Situational Advisor Responsibilities

Postal inspector actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing a current or former employee's military records.
- Contacting Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), state, and local law enforcement agencies for an employee's arrest record.
- Reviewing gun registration records and/or vehicle identification information.
- Meeting with a current or former employee.
- Conducting a formal investigation of an incident.
- Preparing an investigative memorandum and submitting it to postal management.
- Preparing a Presentation Letter (Consider for Presentation) of an incident for the United States attorney or district attorney.
- Acting as a liaison with other law enforcement agencies.
- Consulting with management about security for affected worksites.

Postal Service Legal counsel actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing legal guidance in the best interest of the organization.
- Providing legal advice to management.
- Advising on confidentiality and privacy concerns.

- Providing legal developments in the area of workplace violence.
- Providing the latest information on statutes, regulations, and guidelines about violence prevention.

Workplace improvement analyst actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Consulting with the core team on workplace environment issues.
- Reviewing data available on the morale in the workplace.
- Recommending workplace environment improvement actions to the TAT.

EAP Consultant actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing guidance on how to approach the situation or incident.
- Recommending when indicated, the need to refer employee to EAP.

Outside mental health professional actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing guidance to defuse a situation or incident.
- Interviewing an employee at the first indication of potentially violent behavior for an initial risk assessment.

3-1.5 Ad Hoc Resources

The ad hoc team may include two or more employees. Factors to be considered in assignments are:

- Nonbargaining and bargaining unit representation.
- Diversity of the workplace (i.e., gender, race, and other cultural differences).

Team members are encouraged to identify themselves as postal employees — not craft or management. The coordinator for the ad hoc team may be the Human Resources manager or designee.

Ad hoc resources may include:

- Supervisor or manager (at the incident site).
- Union and management organization leaders.*
- Security control officer.
- Diversity development specialist.
- Manager, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).
- Manager, Safety and Health.
- Manager, Injury Compensation.
- Manager, Personnel.
- Others as deemed necessary.

* The use of union and management organization officials is encouraged whenever appropriate to assist the TAT in managing the case.

3-1.6 Ad Hoc Resource Responsibilities

Although the core TAT deals with higher level incidents of risk, the performance cluster may benefit from having these ad hoc resources assist in dealing with the lower level incidents. Ad hoc resources are performance cluster employees who may be available to assist the TAT. Such resources offer the organization the opportunity to assess a given situation and intervene at priority risk scale levels 3 and 4 to deal with inappropriate behavior before it escalates further. See Exhibit 3-1.2 for the priority risk scale.

Ad hoc resources may visit sites where low level complaints have been received, their primary purpose being to gather information for the core TAT. If appropriate, ad hoc resources may also offer intervention services, i.e., conflict resolution or mediation. Human Resources decides whether or not ad hoc resources should be assigned to those incidents or situations perceived as lower priority.

Performance clusters using this approach have succeeded in preventing further escalation of conflict.

Supervisor or manager (at the incident site) actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Continuing to manage the incident site.
- Determining whether or not security measures are adequate.
- Submitting the threatener's work performance history to the TAT.
- Preparing a brief summary of the incident or situation for the TAT.
- Consulting with Labor Relations about administrative and disciplinary actions.

Manager, Safety and Health actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing the threatener's safety or accident profile.
- Communicating relevant information to the TAT.
- Preparing a brief summary of the employee's safety record for the TAT.

Manager, Injury Compensation actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing an employee's injury compensation files.
- Noting whether or not any Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) claim has been controverted based on medical documentation.
- Noting whether any OWCP claim has been accepted or rejected.
- Communicating relevant information to the TAT.
- Preparing a brief summary of the employee's injury compensation record for the TAT.

Manager, Personnel actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing an employee's Official Personnel File (OPF).
- Reviewing an employee's past work history.
- Determining any history of wage garnishments.

- Preparing a brief summary of the employee's OPF record for the TAT.
- Communicating relevant information to the TAT.

3-1.7 **Criteria for Selecting Ad Hoc Resources**

Persons identified to assist the TAT must have the knowledge, skills, and abilities outlined in the roles of ad hoc members. Identified ad hoc resources should receive appropriate orientation. Although any single person does not need to meet all the following criteria, ad hoc team members should normally have:

- Knowledge of assessment, intervention, mediation, and communication techniques and procedures.
- Ability to recognize problem situations.
- Ability to analyze problems and complaints by listening to and observing employee behavior.
- Ability to gather, organize, and interpret information.
- Ability to communicate with difficult employees.
- Ability to consult with employees and organizations to develop plans and strategies to alleviate problems.
- Ability to document, prepare, update, and maintain confidential client records.
- Knowledge of postal regulations and policies and laws such as the Privacy Act.
- Ability to listen and communicate orally and in writing to a wide range of audiences, including senior management and union officials.
- Ability to know when they are "in over their heads," i.e., the ability to recognize the skill and/or knowledge limitations of this paraprofessional role and seek consultation when necessary to ensure successful resolution of any situation.
- Ability to work independently.
- Ability to handle crisis communications.

- Knowledge of community resources, such as social services and mental health professionals.
- Ability to make follow-up assessments and recommendations.
- Knowledge of national agreements and labor relations policies sufficient to advise management.
- Ability to demonstrate sensitivity to a wide variety of issues, to be flexible and open, and not to have a rigid belief structure regarding labor management relationships.

3-2 Threat Assessment Team Orientation

The Postal Service has developed the Threat Assessment Team Orientation course number 22203-00 for performance cluster TATs and:

- All core TAT members and postal inspectors must attend it.
- When possible, ad hoc members (i.e., local union and management organization leaders) should be included in the orientation.

When this orientation course is scheduled at a facility, the person scheduling it must notify the respective Division Office of the Inspection Service. The Division Office then identifies the inspectors to attend that scheduled orientation course.

Upon completion of the orientation course, the participants will be aware of:

- The Postal Service's commitment to a strategic plan for reducing violence in the workplace.
- The Postal Service's approach to the TAT process.
- The importance of implementing a local TAT.

Team members may augment this training with follow-up or refresher training. Topics may include defusing a difficult situation, managing anger, dealing with difficult employees, etc.

4

Team Process

4-1 Meetings and Minutes

The TAT must meet, *at least once a quarter*, to review team responsibilities and unresolved action items as necessary.

To manage cases, the TAT determines what is to be done, by whom, when, the time frame for completion, and time frame(s) for reporting updates and completion of objectives to the TAT. The TAT assigns action items related to a specific incident and regularly follows up on an agreed-upon risk abatement plan.

Also, the TAT monitors the incident worksite for environmental factors. This additional information helps the TAT to better understand a pattern of behavior and/or events. See Exhibit 2-6b for a list of societal and environmental factors.

Minutes must be kept of each TAT meeting. Although they should be kept to a minimum, they should include risk assessment findings (including information indicating a situation of extreme (level 1) or high (level 2) risk priority rating) and risk abatement actions. Specific risk abatement actions recommended in the TAT document may include:

- Encouraging EAP appointments.
- Assessing the workplace climate.
- Recommending FFD examinations.
- Consulting with an expert on workplace violence.
- Resolving labor management relations.
- Monitoring the worksite, as appropriate.
- Increasing office security.
- Obtaining restraining orders.

Copies of minutes are to be sent to the district manager, senior or lead plant manager, and inspector in charge.

Before the close of each meeting, the TAT assigns responsibilities for implementing all action items. A core TAT member should be identified to monitor individual assignments.

4-2 Incident Response

The following action steps provide guidance for addressing an incident or situation:

1. Notifying appropriate resources:

- Any employee who may be involved in or may be witness to an incident may initiate the notification call to the Human Resources manager, Inspection Service, Labor Relations manager, medical director, district manager, or lead plant manager. You may want to direct calls to one centralized TAT hotline number. This number must be accessible to *all* employees.
- The Human Resources manager or designee determines whether the TAT needs to meet or whether the situation can be addressed through other TAT members or ad hoc resources.

2. Assigning resources:

- If a meeting *is* called, refer to the roles of the involved team members.
- If a formal meeting is *not* called, the Human Resources manager or designee assigns resources to ensure that the incident or situation receives appropriate attention.
- Include the situation or incident in the next official TAT meeting.

3. Collecting information:

- Obtain documentation from employees reporting the situation and from any witnesses.
- Obtain background information from family members.

- Arrange for the incident site's supervisor, manager, or postmaster to participate in the TAT meeting to provide the team with additional information and insight.

4. Making a background inquiry:

- Check the following information sources:
 - Personnel records.
 - Disciplinary records.
 - Safety and health records.
 - Injury compensation claims.
 - Other collateral sources such as the employee's supervisors or managers, coworkers, and former employees if useful.
- Identify and document, if already publicly known, any current psychosocial stressors, such as:
 - Job-related difficulties.
 - Financial difficulties.
 - Legal difficulties.
 - Marriage and family difficulties.
 - Psychiatric disorders (includes substance abuse).

5. Reviewing and analyzing the case:

- Review and analyze all data.
- Assess the need to reinterview victim(s) and witness(es).

6. Documenting the final assessment:

- Keep notes to a minimum.
- Document the current incident and the employee's past history in the TAT minutes.
- Document the case summary and submit it in the TAT minutes; in the case summary, include all noted risk indicators as well as the current assessed level of risk for the incident (see Exhibit 2-6a and Exhibit 2-6b).

- In the case summary include all workplace environment issues, societal issues, and/or potential contributing events that have influenced or may influence the current situation.

7. Developing a risk abatement plan:

- Recommend a plan to alter or adjust the conditions or situation in order to reduce the current and future potential for violence (see Exhibit 2-6a, Exhibit 2-6b, and Exhibit 3-1.2):
 - This risk abatement plan is a collaborative effort among the TAT, the incident or situation site supervisor or manager, and the next higher level manager.
 - The plan may be communicated formally or informally; some type of record must be kept of the agreed-upon course of action.
 - Current plans should take into account all past interventions or actions taken.

8. Following up:

- Oversee the completion of and evaluate the TAT survey (see Exhibit 5a) and assess the impact of the abatement plan.
- Monitor the implementation and the results of the risk abatement plan.
- Use the data entry template (see Exhibit 5b), local or performance cluster tracking procedures, and TAT minutes to track TAT activities.

5

Team Performance Measures

The TAT must measure its performance to gauge whether it is being successful or needs to change its processes. Following is a list of suggested resources to assist in this effort:

1. Threat Assessment Team Survey:

Immediately after the assessment and recommendation phases of an inquiry, the Human Resources manager or designee mails this survey, together with a self-addressed envelope to ease response, to each manager, supervisor, and other employee with whom the TAT dealt. See Exhibit 5a for a sample survey.

2. Number and types of threats and assaults recorded by the Inspection Service:

The local Inspection Service can provide information about the performance cluster.

3. Local or performance cluster tracking system:

The district Human Resources manager or designee should track each situation or incident reported to the TAT, including information such as date, time, reported by, location, priority risk scale level, and disposition. See Exhibit 5b for a suggested data entry template to assist you in these manual tracking efforts.

4. Postincident analysis:

Depending on its seriousness, the TAT should comprehensively review and analyze the incident following its final resolution. This review should include postal responses and follow-up actions to determine:

- What happened.
- Why it happened.
- What could have been done to prevent it.
- What was done to resolve it.

Other indicators in this analysis that the TAT may review include but are not limited to the number of:

- Employees who attended the Workplace Violence Awareness Program training.
- EEO complaints for performance clusters.
- Grievances (especially Articles 2 and 16).
- Safety incidences.
- Injury compensation claims.
- Absenteeisms.
- Inspection Service reports on assaults and threats.
- Performance cluster EAP referrals.

6

Employee Education and Communication

6-1 Information Is Prevention

It is vital that all employees be instructed that the Postal Service has a national zero tolerance policy as defined in the 1992 *Joint Statement on Violence in the Workplace*. It is equally important that all employees be made aware of the existence of their local TAT and the local systems and processes put in place to support zero tolerance. In addition, all *new* employees should be introduced to zero tolerance as part of Postal Service employee orientation efforts. This information can be disseminated through a number of field communication methods, such as, but not limited to:

- Area magazines.
- Performance cluster newsletters.
- Employee Assistance Program newsletter.
- Pay envelope inserts.
- Safety talks.
- Wall posters.
- Direct mailings.
- New employee orientation.

6-2 Supervisor and Manager Training

Supervisors (including those in 204b status) and managers are required to take the Workplace Violence Awareness training course number 21558-00 that includes (a) assistance in identifying potentially threatening situations and behavioral warning signs of at-risk employees, (b) communication skills, and (c) employee support.

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Exhibit 1-1.1a

Sample Zero Tolerance Policy Statement 1

All Employees

[performance cluster, area, or Headquarters unit name]

The leadership of the [performance cluster, area, or Headquarters unit name] has reaffirmed its position on violence and inappropriate behavior in the workplace. Enclosed in this mailing is a copy of the performance cluster's policy regarding acts of violence and threats of violence in the workplace. The policy states that there will be zero tolerance of acts or threats of violence in our workplace by anyone, craft and management alike. This is not a new policy. In February of 1992, the Postal Service, with many of the employee organizations, initiated a joint statement on violence and behavior in the workplace in the aftermath of the Royal Oak tragedy. "We openly acknowledge that in some places or units an unacceptable level of stress exists in the workplace; that there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of violence or any threats of violence by anyone at any level of the Postal Service; and that there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of harassment, intimidation, threats, or bullying by anyone."

We will not tolerate acts or threats of violence in our workplace.

Acts and threats of violence as well as inappropriate behavior in the workplace are some of the most serious and frustrating problems facing the Postal Service today. The incidents of workplace violence in the past have seriously affected the reputation, morale, and credibility of the Postal Service and our employees.

This zero tolerance policy means that each and every act or threat of violence from this day forward, regardless of the persons involved and/or circumstances, will elicit a prompt investigation of facts and an appropriate response to those findings. While certain behaviors can lead to discipline or removal, our emphasis is on providing a safe and healthful workplace environment.

No one should have to work in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. To those of you who question our commitment, judge us not on our words but on our actions. We intend to make our work locations a place where inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.

[__name__]

District Manager

[__name__]

Lead Plant Manager

Exhibit 1-1.1b

Sample Zero Tolerance Policy Statement 2



All Employees

[performance cluster, area, or Headquarters unit name]

A postal employee has a right to perform his or her assigned duties in an atmosphere free of threats, assaults, and other acts of workplace violence. We are committed in the effort to ensure a safe working environment for all employees.

Threats or assaults made directly or indirectly toward any employee or postal customer, even in jest, will not be tolerated. This misconduct causes very real concern and apprehension on the part of employees and customers to whom this type of action is directed.

This zero tolerance policy places all employees on notice that threats, assaults, or other acts of violence committed against other postal employees or customers will result in severe disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the Postal Service. Any employee who has been subjected to a threat or assault is by this policy instructed to immediately report the incident to a manager or supervisor and to the Inspection Service. Employees are also encouraged to report any unusual situation that has the potential to cause workplace violence. Threats of suicide are considered acts of violence. Reports to the Inspection Service, at the request of the employee who reports the incident, will be handled anonymously.

Below are definitions to help you understand and clarify when a threat, assault, or other acts of workplace violence have occurred:

threat (broadly defined) — A statement or act intended to inflict harm or injury on any person, or on his or her property. Threats also include words or actions intended to intimidate another person or to interfere with the performance of his or her official duties (e.g., standing in front of a corridor with a menacing posture and not permitting another person access to load a postal vehicle).

assault (broadly defined) — Any willful attempt to inflict injury upon the person of another, when coupled with an apparent ability to do so, or any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm. **Note:** An assault may be committed without touching, striking, or doing bodily harm to another person (e.g., throwing a brick at a person that does not actually strike the person).

Violence is not limited to fatalities or physical injuries. We recognize that any intentional words, acts, or actions meant to provoke another can escalate and result in injury if they are not immediately and appropriately addressed by management.

[__name__]

District Manager

[__name__]

Lead Plant Manager

Exhibit 1-1.1c (p. 1)

Sample Action Plan for Threats and Assaults



DATE:

MEMORANDUM FOR MANAGERS, POSTMASTERS, AND SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: Action Plan for Threats and Assaults

A postal employee has a right to perform his or her assigned duties in an atmosphere free of threats and assaults. We are committed in the effort to ensure a safe working environment for all employees.

Due to the seriousness of these situations, threats or assaults made directly or indirectly toward any employee or postal customer, even in jest, will not be tolerated. This misconduct causes very real concern and apprehension on the part of employees and customers to whom this type of action is directed.

All threats and assaults are to be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate postal management officials and to the Inspection Service. Also, all unusual situations that have the potential to cause workplace violence should be reported immediately to these officials.

All management personnel must recognize when these circumstances exist and take prompt, appropriate action when necessary to eliminate the possible causes of violence in the workplace. Failure to take the necessary appropriate action, as determined by a thorough investigation, may result in disciplinary action.

In light of the above, the attached Action Plan has been developed to aid you in dealing with potential situations of violence. This plan should be strictly adhered to by all management employees in all postal facilities.

[__name__]

District Manager

[__name__]

Lead Plant Manager

Exhibit 1-1.1c (p. 2)

Sample Action Plan for Threats and Assaults

1. An employee who has been the victim of a threat or assault will immediately report the situation to any manager or supervisor. The manager or supervisor to whom the incident is reported will immediately report the matter to the Postal Inspection Service. In those cases where an employee has been the victim of a threat or assault perpetrated by his or her supervisor, the employee will report the incident to the manager of the supervisor concerned, who will immediately report the incident to the Inspection Service. This reporting requirement must be adhered to without exception for all incidents involving threats and assaults. Upon receiving notification, the Inspection Service will determine the extent to which they will or will not become involved in the matter.
2. Immediately following an incident, all parties to the incident should be interviewed by a TAT member, who will prepare a written summary. Every effort must be made to get witnesses, including the participants, to make a written statement. In most instances of actual physical violence, if possible and with the employee's permission, the wisest action is to take photographs of the employee's injuries.
3. Any employee found to be responsible for a threat or assault is to be immediately placed in a nonduty, nonpay status pending further investigation of the matter. This should be done in accordance with the appropriate article of the applicable craft national agreement, unless the Inspection Service advises to keep the employee on-site in support of their investigation. A third-party supervisor will be assigned to the employee to address issues such as the employee needing items from his or her locker, or picking up a paycheck, etc. The employee is required to provide a telephone number and address where he or she can be reached during regularly scheduled working hours. If nonbargaining unit employees are involved in inappropriate behavior, refer to *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* 651.3, Emergency Placement in Off-Duty Status. Normally, within 72 hours of the incident, a determination should be made as to the appropriate action to be taken. Be careful to ensure that the parties in an incident are given discipline appropriate to each party's involvement.
4. If the situation does not appear dangerous, take the following actions: (a) separate the employees involved and isolate them until interviewed; (b) interview all employees (individually) who have information concerning the incident immediately while impressions are still fresh in their minds; (c) establish circumstances leading to the incident; (d) obtain written statements from each witness; and (e) do not allow witnesses to discuss what happened with each other before preparing their statements.
5. If the situation appears dangerous, e.g., a likelihood of physical violence, order the employee to leave the facility immediately. If an employee refuses to leave, contact the local police and the Postal Inspection Service. Under no circumstance should a supervisor personally attempt to physically remove an employee from the facility.
6. All incidents of employee altercations are to be reported to the Human Resources manager and to the Labor Relations manager. To ensure that timely action is taken in these instances, requests for disciplinary action, with all supporting documentation, should be sent to the Labor Relations manager as soon as possible after the investigation. Additionally, every effort should be made to notify the employee of his or her status within the 72-hour period.

Exhibit 1-1.1c (p. 3)

Sample Action Plan for Threats and Assaults

7. Any employee found responsible for a threat or assault on another employee or customer should be encouraged to make an appointment with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) by his or her supervisor upon return to duty. Any employee who is found to be a victim in connection with an altercation should also be offered the opportunity to visit with the EAP counselor.

Listed below are definitions to help you understand and clarify what is meant by a threat or an assault. The next page contains a checklist of tests to determine whether or not an actual threat has occurred.

threat (broadly defined) A statement or act intended to inflict harm or injury on any person, or on his or her property. Threats also include words or actions intended to intimidate another person or to interfere with the performance of his or her official duties (e.g., standing in front of a corridor with a menacing posture and not permitting another person access to load a postal vehicle).

assault (broadly defined) Any willful attempt to inflict injury on the person of another, when coupled with an apparent ability to do so, or any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm. **Note:** An assault may be committed without touching, striking, or doing bodily harm to another person (e.g., throwing a brick at a person that does not actually strike the person).

Exhibit 1-1.1c (p. 4)

Sample Action Plan for Threats and Assaults

Checklist for Threats and Assaults

If you believe that a *crime* has been committed (persons have been injured or property has been damaged):

1. Seek first aid and medical treatment for all those injured.
2. Immediately call the local police and the Inspection Service (and/or postal police officers).
3. Preserve the scene; **do not** allow **anyone** to touch anything.
4. Identify witnesses, especially if they cannot or will not remain at the scene.
5. To the extent possible, ensure that information received remains confidential.
6. Seek additional assistance if needed.

Otherwise, immediately:

7. Restore order and safety to the work area.
8. Assign involved employees to separate rooms. Instruct or order involved employees to leave the work-room floor, if appropriate. If an employee refuses, call the police.
9. Advise your manager of the incident and notify the TAT.
10. Notify the Human Resources manager and/or Labor Relations manager.
11. Notify the Inspection Service for guidance if necessary.

Then:

12. Identify participants and witnesses and obtain statements from them (with concurrence of Inspection Service and/or local police if called).
13. Investigate all observed or reported altercations.
14. Obtain the telephone number and address of each participant.
15. If necessary, place the employee in a nonduty status. When placing an employee in this status, remember to obtain the most current address and telephone number before he or she leaves.
16. Complete the investigation.
17. Notify the Human Resources manager and the Labor Relations manager as well as the appropriate management officials in the chain of command.
18. Normally within 72 hours, the employee's supervisor renders a decision and notifies the employee of his or her duty status. If the decision is not to return the employee to duty, the supervisor must send a request for emergency off-duty placement to Labor Relations within 72 hours.
19. If additional discipline is to be issued, forward a properly completed request with all supporting documentation to Labor Relations within 72 hours.
20. Encourage the employee found responsible for a threat or assault on another employee or customer to make an appointment with the EAP. Offer the other affected party (or parties) the opportunity to have an on-the-clock appointment with an EAP counselor.

Remember, prompt and appropriate action is essential to reducing and/or eliminating employee altercations. Failure to conduct an immediate and thorough investigation can be detrimental to disciplinary proceedings.

Exhibit 2-6a

Risk Indicators

Risk indicators include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Past history of violent behavior, e.g., physical assaults on others.
- Having a concealed weapon or flashing a weapon in the workplace.
- Fascination with semiautomatic or automatic weapons and their capability to cause great harm.
- History of mental health problems requiring treatment, especially a history of arrest before hospitalization.
- Altered consciousness (including blackouts and “lost” or unaccounted-for time lapses).
- History of suicide or homicide risk.
- Odd or bizarre beliefs (magical or satanic beliefs, or sexually violent fantasies).
- Fascination with homicidal incidents of workplace violence and empathy for those who commit acts of violence.
- Preoccupation with violent themes (in movies and literature).
- Inspiration of fear in others (this clearly exceeds mere intimidation).
- Romantic obsession with a coworker characterized by harassment, intimidation, and/or stalking.
- Intimidation and harassment of others.
- Current or history of alcohol or drug abuse.
- Obsessive focus on grudge — often quick to perceive unfairness or malice in others, especially supervisor.
- Especially for males, great concerns or emphasis on sexual fidelity of mate.
- Recent stressful events or severe losses.
- Perceived loss of options.
- Direct or veiled threats of bodily harm toward supervisory personnel, coworkers, or customers.
- Physical deterioration (head injuries, cancer, disability, kidney failure, etc.).
- Extreme sense of moral righteousness about things in general as well as believing that the organization does not follow its own policy and procedures.
- History of poor impulse control and poor interpersonal skills.
- Inability to handle constructive criticism well and projecting blame on others.
- Demonstrated disregard for safety or coworkers.
- Tendency to be a loner with little family or social support and often having an excessive investment in the job.

Note: Remember, no definite profile exists to determine whether or not a threatener will ultimately commit an act of workplace violence. However, these signs, especially if they are in a cluster, can help to determine risk abatement action(s) relative to the TAT’s initial risk assessment of a potentially violent person. Actions, such as a fitness-for-duty examination, may be necessary to assess the risk more adequately. Recommend these actions only after consulting with the performance cluster’s or area office’s medical director.

Exhibit 2-6b

Environmental and Societal Factors and Contributing Events*

Evaluation of additional information may help the TAT better understand a pattern of behavior and/or events and thereby help the TAT develop preventive measures to moderate risk and liability. The TAT must evaluate workplace climate issues and potential contributing events that may escalate the potential for violence. For example, additional information such as the following environmental and societal factors and contributing events are relevant considerations:

Environmental factors (at the worksite):

- Labor/management relations within the performance cluster are strained.
- Ineffective communications between and among managers and employees prevent dissemination of information.
- Preferential treatment and inconsistent application of rules and standards are apparent.
- Conflict management mechanisms (e.g., grievances, EEO complaints, and due process) are not understood or used.
- Discipline is perceived as inappropriate, unfair, or ineffective.
- Complement or resources are inadequate for performance expectations.
- Employees feel depersonalized, like a commodity or tool.
- Changes in management behavior or style have occurred.
- The accident rate is up; safety is compromised or is perceived as compromised.

Societal factors:

- The level of violence in the surrounding community or neighborhood of the threatener (assaults, rape, suicide, and homicide rates).
- Local news coverage (both amount and detail) of violent events (e.g., Oklahoma City bombing or World Trade Center and Pentagon disasters).
- Activity of violent groups in the community (gangs, militant groups, etc.).
- The level of violence on television, in the movies, etc.

Contributing events:

- Pending divorce.
- Pending financial or legal problems.
- Perceived or pending job suspension or termination.
- Loss of a loved one.
- Onset of a serious health problem.
- Alcohol or other drug relapse.
- Discontinuance of medication or medication not working.
- Discontinuance of therapy sessions with psychiatrist or other mental health professional.

* The above does not constitute an all-inclusive listing. For additional factors, please contact the performance cluster's workplace improvement analyst.

Exhibit 3-1.2 (p. 1)

Priority Risk Scale

Priority Rank	Explanation
Priority 1 (Extreme Risk)	<p>A clear and immediate threat of violence to an identifiable target.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Directly stated threat of violence.</i> b. <i>Clearly identified target (person, worksite, or organization), and</i> c. <i>Specific description of the intended violent act.</i>
Priority 2 (High Risk)	<p>A threat of violence, usually to an identifiable target, but currently lacking immediacy and/or a specific plan; or a specified plan of violence, but currently lacking a specific target.</p>
Priority 3 (Low or Moderate Risk)	<p>A relatively nonspecific threat of violence from a person expressing concerns with personal and/or organizational issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>The threatener does not indicate a clear and immediate threat of violence to an identifiable target.</i> b. <i>The threatener appears to be insufficiently influenced by current circumstances to engage in a dangerous act.</i> <p><i>Such threats frequently arise from a volatile workplace climate, or deterioration of an employee's personal appearance and workplace relationships.</i></p>
Priority 4 (No Risk)	<p>No threat of violence indicated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>No suggestion of current danger or threat of violence.</i> b. <i>Possibility of verbal or other inappropriate communications, which include derogatory comments without specific or implied threats of violence.</i>

Exhibit 3-1.2 (p. 2)

Priority Risk Scale

Discussion of Priority Risk Scale

Priority 1 (Extreme Risk)

A clear and immediate threat of violence to an identifiable target.

Priority 1 means that the threatener has:

- Directly stated a threat of violence,
- Clearly identified a target (person, worksite, or organization), **and**
- Appears to have communicated a specific description of the intended violent act, including the means, opportunity, and motivation to carry out the threat.

Priority 1 threats:

- Are specific and credible.
- Have a stated intention by the employee to seriously harm or kill him- or herself and/or others, or may be directed at a specific worksite.
- Often have a vindictive, revengeful quality in which retribution plays a role.

At priority 1, the degree of danger increases and credibility is enhanced by:

- Signs that the threatener has specific knowledge of the location, activities, and/or personal life of the target.
- The extent to which the threatened action is realistic or practical in design.
- Repeated, escalating, and increasingly detailed threats.
- A progressive decline in the employee's physical and/or psychological health.
- A person experiencing intolerable levels of frustration or stress, as specified in Exhibit 2-6a.

The TAT should give immediate priority to threats at this level, including:

- Continual management of the case.
- Active review of the security for the identified targeted person and/or worksite.
- Writing a formal risk abatement plan that includes intervention with the threatener and/or organizational unit.

Plan immediate action to prevent a violent outcome.

Exhibit 3-1.2 (p. 3)

Priority Risk Scale

Priority 2 (High Risk)

A threat of violence, usually to an identifiable target, but currently lacking immediacy and/or a specific plan; or a specified plan of violence, but currently lacking a specific target.

A priority 2 rating indicates a threat that is real and feasible, often with a vengeful, menacing quality, but lacking the level of specificity and credibility of a priority 1 threat.

- The threatener does not know or has not identified a specific target.
- The threatened action may be vaguely defined, unrealistic, or impractical in design.
- A priority 2 threat may also result from a volatile workplace climate or close connection to worksites previously or currently experiencing threats of violence.
- High-risk indicators may be present (see Exhibit 2-6a).

The TAT's response should include continuing the threat assessment, case monitoring, and intervening at the individual and/or organizational unit as indicated.

Priority 3 (Low or Moderate Risk)

A relatively nonspecific threat of violence from a person expressing concerns with personal and/or organizational issues.

A priority 3 rating **does not indicate**:

- A clear and immediate threat of violence to an identifiable target.
- That the threatener is sufficiently influenced by current circumstances to perform a violent act.

Priority 3 threats *may* include:

- General expressions of concern or dissatisfaction with personal issues and/or interpersonal relationships.
- General expressions of concern or dissatisfaction with organizational issues that may result from a volatile workplace climate.

The TAT's response to a Priority 3 risk should include an assessment of the validity of specific complaints or concerns, a reasonable amount of monitoring, and intervention at the individual and/or organizational unit level. Specific concerns include a progressive decline in an employee's physical and/or psychological health and/or worsening of organizational climate.

Priority 4 (No Risk)

No threat of violence indicated.

Priority 4 means that no current danger or threat of violence exists. The threatener may engage in verbal or nonverbal communication that includes offensive, inappropriate, or derogatory content, or expressions of anger or dissatisfaction without a specific or implied threat of violence.

Exhibit 5a (p. 1)

Sample Threat Assessment Team Survey

U. S. POSTAL SERVICE
THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM SURVEY



Threat Assessment Team Survey

Date: _____ Team member(s) on case: _____

A critical measure of the Threat Assessment Team's (TAT's) performance is the effectiveness of members helping employees and management deal with reported threats, inappropriate behavior, and other acts of violence. Since you have recently had the TAT's assistance in a particular situation at your facility, your answers to the following questions will help us ensure that proper assistance is being provided. Please complete this questionnaire so that we can continually improve our level of services to the employees in our district. Please return the questionnaire in the provided envelope.

Manager, Human Resources

	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> ← ↔ → </div>					N/A
	Very Helpful				Not Helpful	
<i>Check the appropriate box to reflect your rating.</i>	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. How quickly did the TAT respond to your call?						
2. How well did the TAT arrive at an objective approach to managing the problem?						
3. How well did the TAT identify steps or actions necessary for you to solve the problem?						
4. How well did the TAT locate appropriate resources to help resolve the issues?						
5. How appropriate were the TAT's recommendations?						
6. How well did the TAT handle confidentiality and privacy issues?						
7. How well did the TAT demonstrate a competent and professional manner?						
8. Did knowing that the TAT existed in your performance cluster give you confidence to decide to report this matter?						
9. How effective do you think the steps taken as a result of the TAT's recommendations will be in reducing threats in your workplace in the future?						

Exhibit 5a (p. 2)

Sample Threat Assessment Team Survey

10. Would you call the TAT for help in the future? Yes ____ No ____

11. In what other ways could the TAT have been of more assistance to you?

Please return this survey in the provided envelope to:
MANAGER, HUMAN RESOURCES
THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM LEADER
[LOCAL ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Exhibit 5b

Threat Assessment Team Data Entry Template

Threat Assessment Team Data Entry Template				
Incident Summary	Performance Cluster:			
	Threat Report Date:			
	Reported By:			
	Date of Occurrence:			
	Location:			ZIP Code:
	Injury:	No	Yes	
	What Happened:			
	<i>Short incident description.</i>			
	<i>Remember to describe specific behaviors.</i>			
	Priority Risk Scale:	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Participant 1 (Threatener)	SSN:			
	First Name:			
	Middle Initial:			
	Last Name:			
	Current Position:			
	Date of Birth:			
	Sex:	Male	Female	
Participant 2 (Threatener 2 or Target)	SSN:			
	First Name:			
	Middle Initial:			
	Last Name:			
	Current Position:			
	Date of Birth:			
	Sex:	Male	Female	
Inspection Service or Police Action	Inspection Service Involved:	No	Yes	
	Investigative Memorandum:	No	Yes	
	Weapon Used:	No	Yes	
	Police Involved:	No	Yes	
	Police Action Taken:	No	Yes	
	Police Report Number:			
TAT Assignments	TAT Members Assigned:			
	Recommendations:			
	Actions Taken:	Administrative	Legal	Other
Witness (Witness 1)	First Name:			
	Middle Initial:			
	Last Name:			
	Current Position:			
	SSN:			
Witness (Witness 2)	First Name:			
	Middle Initial:			
	Last Name:			
	Current Position:			
	SSN:			

Glossary

assault (broadly defined)	Any willful attempt to inflict injury on the person of another, when coupled with an apparent ability to do so, or any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm. Note: An assault may be committed without touching, striking, or doing bodily harm to another person (e.g., throwing a brick at a person that does not actually strike the person).
credible threat (USPIS defined)	A statement or action that has the apparent capability of inflicting harm and is directed in a manner that causes individuals to know that they are the target of the threat and that puts them in fear for their safety or that of their immediate family.
crisis management	Management with the purpose of delegating specific roles and responsibilities to crisis team members for dealing with violent crises, providing for the care and support of victims and their families, and establishing an orderly return to normal operations. The focus is confined to the management of violent incidents at the crisis and postcrisis stage.
dangerousness situation or incident	Any behavior with the intended outcome of causing harm or injury to others. A difficult or risky state of affairs or a combination of circumstances over time that has led to or could lead to violence.
threat (broadly defined)	A statement or act intended to inflict harm or injury on any person, or on his or her property. Threats also include words or actions intended to intimidate another person or to interfere with the performance of his or her official duties (e.g., standing in front of a corridor with a menacing posture and not permitting another person access to load a postal vehicle).
threatener	A person reported to the TAT or later identified by the TAT as a person with a risk of violence toward others or him- or herself and/or a person who has committed an act of physical violence.
violence (USPS defined)	Any verbal or physical threat or assault on a person that either has the intention of injuring or results in injury. Note: Violence is not limited to fatalities or physical injuries. Intentional words, acts, or actions meant to provoke another can escalate and result in injury if not immediately and appropriately addressed by management. Threats of suicide are considered acts of violence.

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