WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

STANDARD PROCEDURE STATEMENT:

It is the intent of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), through its established policies and department training, to minimize the impact of a crisis situation in the workplace. In the event of a crisis situation in the workplace, managers will make every attempt to provide for the security, safety, and psychological well-being of the employees, their families, and coworkers by following the procedures outlined in this plan. ODOT will provide communication about the crisis situation to family members, other employees, and the media. ODOT will make intervention services available to all those impacted by the crisis situation including the employee’s family members.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN:

The purpose of this Workplace Violence Crisis Management Plan is to outline the responsibilities of individuals involved in a crisis situation in the workplace and to recognize that there are three lines of authority in a crisis: 1) law enforcement; 2) emergency medical professionals; and 3) department management. Consistent with this policy, threats or acts of physical violence will not be tolerated. Any ODOT employee committing such acts will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

AUTHORITY:

Ohio Revised Code §5501.04
DAS Directive 04-26, dated July 1, 2003
OCSEA/AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 11.04

SCOPE:

ODOT’s prohibition against threats and acts of violence applies to all employees, independent contractors and all persons conducting business with ODOT. Individuals who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination in accordance with applicable laws, rules, or the collective bargaining agreement and may also be subject to criminal penalties. Non-employees engaged in violent acts will be reported to the proper authorities and prosecuted.
FISCAL IMPACT:

Not applicable.

DEFINITIONS:

Crisis: Refers to threats of or actual violence in the workplace.

Threat: Any word or actions involving intent to harm an individual, one’s self or property.

Violence: Any act of physical, verbal, or psychological threat or abuse, assault, or trauma on an individual that results in physical and/or psychological damage.

PROCEDURE:

1. The Deputy Director of the division and/or district will be the contact person. If a crisis situation involves more than one division and/or district, one contact person will be chosen to represent all the affected divisions and/or districts. An alternate contact person will be appointed in the absence of the designated contact person. The division and/or district contact person has the authority to assume or delegate the duties required by this plan.

2. If a crisis situation involves an injury that requires immediate medical attention, the appropriate medical professional will be alerted by the employee discovering the crisis (or his or her designee) by calling emergency number 9-1-1 or other local emergency number(s) if 9-1-1 is not available. That employee must then notify his or her supervisor.

3. Any employee discovering a crisis situation at ODOT’s Central Office during normal business hours (7:30 AM to 4:30 PM) will immediately notify his or her supervisor. If the supervisor is not the division contact person, the supervisor will advise the division contact person of the crisis. Failure to make the required notifications after learning of a crisis situation may be cause for discipline.

4. At ODOT’s Central Office outside of normal business hours (4:30 PM to 7:30 AM), weekends, and scheduled holidays, Building Security Personnel will follow their Post Orders concerning a crisis situation and notify the designated ODOT personnel.

5. At all other ODOT facilities, outside of normal business hours (4:30 PM to 7:30 AM), weekends, and scheduled holidays, any ODOT employee discovering a crisis situation will notify his or her supervisor. If the supervisor is not the division or district contact person, the supervisor will promptly notify the division or district contact person of the crisis. Failure to make the required notifications after learning of a crisis situation may be cause for discipline.
6. Immediate action will be taken by the division or district contact person, or his or her
designee, to make the best effort to ensure the safety of those involved in the crisis
situation or affected by the crisis.

7. The division or district contact person, or his or her designee, will notify the Director, or
his or her designee, with the facts of the crisis situation as soon as possible. The division
or district contact person, or his or her designee, will assume or assign the responsibilities
of:

- Acting as ODOT’s liaison with law enforcement, fire, medical, and other
  community resources offering assistance, if necessary.

- Contacting the immediate relative(s) of the employee, and providing
  communications about the crisis situation to other employees and the media in a
  factual and timely manner.

- Acting as ODOT’s spokesperson to monitor incoming calls, and document, in
detail, everything that was done in response to the crisis situation.

8. If a crime has been committed, the division or district contact person or his or her
designee will immediately notify the nearest office of the Ohio State Highway Patrol
(OSHP) and the Office of Chief Legal Counsel at 1-800-952-5029.

9. Threats of Violence:

- Do treat the threat seriously; assess risk and level of response.

- Do develop an initial action plan; respond in a timely manner.

- Do assign responsibilities, respect confidentiality, and maintain flexibility.

- Do conduct a preliminary investigation and maintain documentation of the
  situation.

- Do continuously reassess the situation.

- Don’t overreact, over commit to safety, anonymity, or protection.

- Don’t use an external consultant resource without the approval of the Director or
  his or her designee. Use resources at the site area.

10. In the event of threats of violence to a person(s) or property by means of firearms, fire,
explosions, bombs, etc., the personnel of the affected facility will be evacuated from the
threatened area. The division or district deputy director or designee will determine if an
evacuation to an off premises site is necessary and determine that site.
11. If a building evacuation is necessary, it will be conducted in a safe and orderly manner. The division or district contact person will notify the OSHP, will ensure that staff from each evacuated facility accounts for their personnel, and that all persons are evacuated from the building. Responding emergency service personnel will be notified of persons not accounted for to aid in determining complete evacuation.

12. Re-entry into the facility will be restricted to emergency service and/or authorized personnel until the person in charge determines the crisis is resolved and a safe re-entry can be made.

13. In the event a person causing a crisis situation leaves the building, the contact person will work with emergency personnel and the Office of Chief Legal Counsel to prevent that person from re-entry.

**Post Crisis Procedures:**

ODOT will offer debriefing sessions to personnel impacted by the crisis experience in order to:

a. Inform appropriate involved personnel about the incident.

b. Provide information about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) concerning normal reaction to trauma and coping.

The contact person will brief ODOT’s management about the crisis. The contact person will evaluate and assess the Workplace Violence Crisis Management Plan and recommend changes based on facts from the crisis just experienced in preparation and prevention of a future crisis.

**Employee Management:**

Potentially violent employee:

a. Monitor the behavior of the employee. Be cognizant of indicators of dangerous behavior (warning signs) and document abnormal or dangerous behaviors by the employee.

Threatening employee:

a. Assess risk and appropriate response.

b. Form initial action plan.

c. Inform the threatened employee.

d. Immediately contact a supervisor or LRO who will then contact the Office of Chief Legal Counsel at (614)752-5029.
e. Reassess the situation and take additional steps to prevent escalation if warranted.

f. Document actions in writing.

**Violent employee: (Safety for yourself and others is most important.)**

a. Immediately contact appropriate law enforcement, medical professionals, or fire officials and follow the procedures outlined in this plan.

b. Contact the Office of Chief Legal Counsel to determine if administrative leave or a restraining order is appropriate.

c. Advise the person(s) that he/she will be prosecuted for trespassing if he/she returns to ODOT property or project site without ODOT’s permission.

d. Document in writing.

**Other Materials:**

Attachment 1: Management Techniques
Attachment 2: Security Issues
Attachment 3: Media Management
Attachment 4: Threat Assessment
Attachment 5: Warning Signs, Symptoms, and Risk Factors
Attachment 6: Emergency Notification List*

*Specific for each departmental facility
ATTACHMENT 1
Management Techniques

1. Assess the crisis situation.
   a. How many individuals are involved?
   b. Does the person(s) causing the crisis situation have a history of violence?
   c. Is there a weapon involved?
   d. Is the individual displaying anger or loss of temper?
   e. What is the distance between the individual and yourself?
   f. What messages are you sending to the individual?

2. Reduce tension, be calm, be alert, be non-threatening, avoid overreaction, and stay respectful.

3. Clarify messages, listen to what is being said, ask questions, use silence, and restate what was said.

4. Respect personal space. Stand at least 3 to 7 feet away from the individual.

5. Be aware of your body position and the individual’s body position involved in the crisis situation. Have eye contact, make your movements slow and deliberate. Have a low, but firm, tone of voice.

6. Permit verbal venting. It allows a channel for anger instead of physical violence.

7. Set and enforce reasonable limits. Be clear and concise, set consequences, and suggest alternatives.

8. Patience is usually the best strategy. If the individual has not attacked you immediately, he or she hasn’t decided what to do. Take nothing for granted. Never let your guard down.

9. Ignore challenge questions, use redirection. Don’t patronize; go along before you attempt to reason with the individual.

10. Avoid physical contact with the individual.
ATTACHMENT 2
Security Issues

1. Notification of the Ohio State Highway Patrol and local police.

2. Notification of emergency medical services, if necessary.


4. Notification of impacted employees.

5. Notification of ODOT’s Office of Chief Legal Counsel.

Secondary Measures to Consider

6. Official notification to offender regarding potential trespass.

7. Potential work schedule adjustments.

9. Possible temporary relocation of affected employees.

10. Possible permanent transfer of affected employees.
ATTACHMENT 3
Media Management

1. Designate the appropriate district or Central Office Public Information Officer (PIO) to serve as the incident liaison to the media. If a PIO is not available, designate a senior manager to serve as the incident spokesperson.

2. Designate an area for media personnel.

3. Anticipate questions.

4. Report only facts. Be honest, timely, and open.

5. No “off the record” statements.

6. Be aware of appearance before media; remain calm.

7. Explain the situation. Avoid “no comment” answers.

8. Don’t attack the media. Establish the ground rules before the interview and allow time for questions and answers.

9. Statements to the media should be thought out and rehearsed. Be prepared!
ATTACHMENT 4
Threat Assessment Checklist

NOTE: If violence appears to be imminent, take necessary precautions. Safety to yourself and others is of utmost importance.

1. Take the threat seriously, but don’t overreact.

2. Who made the threat?

3. What threat was made? (Use quotes if possible)

4. What led to the threat?

5. How was the threat made? (Physical, verbal, etc.)

6. Did you witness the threat?

7. Who told you about the threat?

8. Did anyone witness the threat?

9. Get names, locations at the time, and what they actually heard or saw.

10. How did those persons present respond to the threat?

11. What is the relationship between the individual(s) who witnessed the threat, those threatened and the offending individual?

12. Have witnesses been interviewed? Statements taken?

13. Has the individual made threats in the past? Have those threats been carried out?

14. Has the individual exhibited any warning signs? (Bizarre behavior, obsession, physical intimidation, paranoid behavior, moral righteousness, depression, etc.)

15. Has the individual been warned?

16. Has the individual been interviewed? What is the potential for violence? What degree of control is needed?

17. Have all appropriate notifications been made? Has ODOT responded? What actions have been taken so far?

18. Document your actions in dealing with the crisis situation.

Many more questions may be applicable. Structure this checklist to fit your specific situation.
ATTACHMENT 5
Warning Signs, Symptoms, and Risk Factors

Below are examples of warning signs, symptoms, and risk factors which may indicate an employee’s potential for workplace violence. **NONE OF THESE SIGNS SHOULD BE IGNORED.**

1. Discussing weapons or bringing them to the workplace.
2. Making intimidating statements like: “You know what happened at the Post Office”; “I’ll get even”; or “You haven’t heard the last from me”.
3. Possessing reading material with themes of violence, revenge, and/or harassment.
4. Keeping records of other employees the individual believes to have violated departmental policy.
5. Physical signs of hard breathing, reddening of the complexion, menacing stare, loudness, or fast profane speech.
6. Acting out, either verbally or physically.
7. Disgruntled employee or ex-employee who is excessively bitter.
8. Being a loner.
9. Having a romantic obsession with a coworker who does not share that interest.
11. Intense anger and/or lack of empathy.
13. Brooding, depressed, strange behavior, “time bomb ready to go off.”
14. Drug and/or alcohol abuse.

Supervisors should be alerted to and aware of these indicators. If an employee exhibits such behavior(s), the employee should be monitored and such behavior should be documented and reported to the Office of Chief Legal Counsel, Investigative Services.
ATTACHMENT 6
Emergency Notification List

CENTRAL OFFICE

Ohio State Highway Patrol – General Headquarters 614-466-2660
Ohio State Highway Patrol – Investigative Services 614-752-0235
ODOT Central Office Building OSHP Security 614-752-6007
Columbus Police 9-1-1
Columbus Police (non-emergency) 614-645-4545
Columbus Fire Department 9-1-1
Emergency Medical 9-1-1

ODOT Chief Legal Counsel 614-752-5029
1-800-952-5029

Ameritech Telephone Company Customer Service 1-800-327-9346
Ameritech Telephone Company Annoyance Calls 1-800-631-8789

American Electric Power 614-836-2570
1-800-277-2177

Columbus Water Company 614-645-8270
Columbus Water Main Break 614-645-7788

Columbia Gas Company Emergency Service 614-461-1576
1-800-282-0157