



It's time for **worker security** to receive the same attention as worker safety.

Society today is no longer predisposed to viewing utility employees in a friendly manner, and aggression toward them is growing. For some time, the steady rise in aggression toward utility workers has flown under the radar. Whether employee or contractor, job site violence is a real threat. Of the multitude of issues fueling this aggression, one of the most significant is shifting public opinions of utilities themselves. For a growing segment of the population, public utilities are nuisances to be confronted, not benefactors providing a service. And this dissatisfaction and loathing for the utility are commonly expressed through violence aimed at field employees. However, employee security doesn't receive the same attention as worker safety. This lack of attention is something that we need to rectify.

One of the reasons for this inattention is a fundamental lack of understanding. Quite frankly, the concepts of worker security aren't as easy to understand as safety concepts. For example, it's easy to recognize the cause-and-effect relationships between safety, equipment maintenance and worker injury. But the correlations between security, training and violence aren't as apparent — yet they're just as real.

Safety vs. Security

To understand the concepts of worker security, you need to know the differences between safety and security. But that's easier said than done. People often use the words interchangeably, but their definitions are different. In their simplest forms, safety is protection from hazards, whereas security is

protection from threats. Hazards tend to be dangers of circumstance, while threats are products of intent.

In my training sessions, I often describe the differences like this:

- **Safety** protects us from ourselves.
- **Security** protects us from others.
- **Safety** is protection against stupidity, carelessness and happenstance.
- **Security** is protection against intentional harm and aggression.
- **Safety** is static and procedure-driven.
- **Security** is fluid and approach-driven.

Worker safety focuses on rules and procedures based on verifiable historical consequences. They're static because their foundational problems don't change. Safety focuses on your actions; if you follow the safety rules, you stay safe. For instance, wearing a

The conflict will take place on or adjacent to their property, in their community. They know the area, and they know what resources are available to aid them in the conflict. All of this places you at a disadvantage. But good de-escalation training makes you aware of these advantages and provides methods to counter them.

Hostile encounters often revolve around a core issue that has its origins in fear or a perceived lack of respect. You may not recognize it at first, but it's there if you look closely enough. And you need to realize that the core issue may be historical. It can be something that occurred months, years or decades ago. It could even be something that happened to someone else. But whatever it is, it's still very real and relevant to the person involved.

Once you've identified and dealt with the core issue, the chances of de-escalating a conflict rise significantly, and it'll be time to put your de-escalation skills to work. If you believe you can de-escalate the situation, give it a try; you'll be surprised how easy most conflicts are to defuse. But understand, you can't

de-escalate every situation. Confrontations are fluid and can become violent astonishingly fast. So, be mindful of signs that the conversation is deteriorating. And if you see the situation spiraling out of control, leave.

Training Considerations

To become proficient at using security skills such as situational awareness and de-escalation takes practice and a commitment to learning. Look for training that addresses the problems faced in the field. And find a trainer who understands the unique needs of your profession.

However, finding the right training program and trainer can be challenging. When you start looking, you'll find people everywhere claiming security expertise. Many people will have excellent capabilities, but some are charlatans. Also, be aware that a lot of training is more tactical and theoretical than work-related.

Just as good civilian worker-focused security training isn't all theory and formula, it's also distinctly different from military or

law enforcement security training. Effective worker-focused training pulls relevant parts of military or law enforcement methods into a down-to-earth program supported by practical experience. So, make sure your training meets your specific needs.

Finally, remember that your security is your responsibility. Violence can erupt anywhere at any time. But practical security skills can give you the confidence to live life to the fullest. So, take steps to gain the skills you need. And when the opportunity arises, help bring attention to the need for enhanced worker security. IP

About the Author: Jim Willis is president of InDev Tactical, a security training and consulting firm. He is a utility engineer, industry professional, and credentialed homeland security and anti-terrorism expert. Jim's utility and security work has brought him into more than 30 countries and numerous combat zones. Reach him at 703-623-6819 or jim.willis@indevtactical.net.

BASHLIN

FLEX-FIT

88FFX4D Series Patent Pending

The **ONLY** Belt on the market that allows for adjustment of **both** the **upper** and **lower** D-Rings for a truly unique comfortable custom fit!



No. 88FFX4DMP



No. 88FFX4DCC
*Accessories not included



No. 111FLDSX



Sizes:

Small	(018-020)
Medium	(021-023)
Large	(024-026)
X-Large	(027-029)
2X-Large	(030-032)



www.bashlin.com | 119 W. Pine Street Grove City, PA 16127 | 724-458-8340