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The Violent Neighborhoods and Workplace Violence

The urban environment provides a unique group of everyday challenges for your Apartment Management team. Various tenants may suffer from drug abuse, estranged relationships with spouses or significant others, young family members joining gangs and evicted tenants who have limited anger management skills. Combined with pressure from unemployment, repossession of vehicles and credit card debt or the absence of approved credit, these issues and conditions can provide a “trigger” to incidents on your property.

Besides managing occupancy, rent collection and maintenance, your managers may be challenged with unique relationship management encounters. Handled poorly, incidents may result in violent conclusions.

According to the American Management Association 50% of companies surveyed reported incidents or threats in the last four years. Violence occurred more than once at 30% of the workplaces surveyed. 25% of the victims ignored the warning signs. Are you vulnerable? Should you train your managers on this topic? Perhaps these frightening statistics provided by the National Crime Victimization Survey can illustrate the magnitude of the problem.

- 2 million assaults and threats of violence annually
- 396,000 aggravated assaults
- 51,000 rapes and sexual assaults
- 1,000 homicides

The statistics provide information on actual reports and not from persons who have been involved in Violence in the Workplace but not reported their situation. The workers who have been bullied or harassed on the job have not been taken into consideration in these reports. How can your people survive confrontation by residents, tenants or guests? The following outline will provide some basic measures to enhance your chance of survival.

Seven Steps to Deal with Confrontation

1. Understand the mindset of the hostile or potentially violent person. The hostile person wants to communicate their grievance in a most compelling manner to someone right now. Give the person the opportunity to express their feelings. Even if they are wrong in their feelings, their perceptions are their reality in these situations.
2. Practice “Active Listening”. Stop whatever you are doing and give this person your undivided attention. Listen to what is really being said and ask only open-ended questions. Use paraphrasing to ensure understanding. For example, “So what you’re saying is.....” This allows more time to pass which gives you a better chance of survival because no one can remain in a rage longer than a minute or two.

3. Build trust and provide help. You will want to win the Academy Award while in this discussion. Be calm, courteous, respectful, patient, open and honest. Never belittle, embarrass or verbally attack a hostile person.
4. Allow a total airing of the grievance without comment or judgment. Make eye contact, but do not stare at them. Allow the verbal venting of emotion. Let the person have their say, but not necessarily their way. Ignore challenges and insults - Do not take anything personal.
5. Allow the aggrieved party to suggest a solution. A person will usually agree to a resolution that they helped formulate. Many times the person will surprise you with their reasonable solution.
6. Move toward a Win-Win resolution. Preserve the person's dignity. Switch the focus on what you can do to help them rather than what you can't do to help them.
7. Involve the authorities. If none of the above steps work at diffusing the situation then involve a supervisor or manager. If this situation remains volatile and unsafe for anyone then call the police.

Remember to stay calm during an ordeal. Trust your instincts. Try not to make any physical contact and give them their "personal space" Maintain an arm's length or more. Manage your body language by using an open posture with your hands open and not clenched. Position an angry person to have access to the door or other exit when you are in a room. Remember to take all threats seriously. Do not become a victim of circumstances. Make a commitment to survive this type of situation no matter what! Reporting any and all violence will benefit you and your staff. A trained, aware and informed manager will have the opportunity to identify, address and solve a problem before it becomes a violence statistic.

For more information on management training, violence prevention support and incident interdiction, contact *Huffmaster Crisis Response, LLC* at 800-446-1515 or visit us on the web at www.huffmaster.com.

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