



**Threat Assessment and
Management Associates Inc.**
Workplace Violence Specialist

Defusing Workplace Violence

The Leader-Post (Regina)
Monday, August 13, 2001
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The comforting belief that deadly workplace violence does not happen in small communities like Regina was shattered Tuesday by the sound of two shots in the front doorway of CKCK TV.

The gunman, a 50-year-old man and 31-year employee of the station who had been fired the week before, was unable to enter the building. A CTV official told media that station management had warned staff the man was not to be readmitted into the building.

According to RCMP, the man fired a shot at the locked security door and then turned the gun on himself in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. He is in hospital in serious condition.

A former Regina police officer who now talks to employers and employees about workplace violence echoed the words that must have been heard all week around the station.

"How much more tragic this could have been had he gained entry," Heather Gray said from her home office in northwest Regina. "Obviously he was serious. He went through with shooting himself."

Gray credited management at the station for taking precautions when they perceived a potential risk. "A lot of companies don't even want to acknowledge this type of thing is even a possibility with any of their people."

Nowadays, managers have to look for "pre-incident indicators" like atypical, abusive or threatening behaviour and take all threats seriously, she said.

"If they're making a threat, obviously they're one step closer to following it out."

In recent years, Gray witnessed many companies ask police to offer lectures on workplace violence. In January, she left her 20-year career as a police officer to form Dynamic

Consulting. She now provides one- and two-day workshops for staff and management.

"Organizations are increasingly becoming more aware that they are liable if something goes wrong."

Gray teaches people to be active listeners when confronted with a hostile co-worker or customer, and to avoid phrases that only trigger more anger, such as "Calm down" or "It's no big thing."

She will investigate specific complaints, help companies develop anti-violence policies and use a computer model to assess threats, and to beef up security where needed. She also teaches employers how to hire and fire in order to avoid dangerous responses.

"If you're going to escort someone out, do it humanely, and have some after-care (like counseling) put into place, so that you're not saying goodbye to them at the door, 'Have a nice life, don't come back.'"

Much of Gray's work revolves around identifying bullying. "Where you have a toxic workplace, the most common (reason) will be a bully... I don't deal with the person, that's up to the company. I can advise them how to go about it."

Bullying takes on many forms, from physical assault to more subtle abuse such as gossip, unjustified criticism and career sabotage. Gray quoted from a recent study that suggested bullies are split equally between men and women, and 81 per cent are managers.

"If you've got a toxic work group with a bully, you probably don't have high productivity and efficiency and satisfaction within that workgroup. Those things suffer because everyone is distracted."