



DUTY OF CARE IN THE WORKPLACE

Duty of Care refers to the moral and legal obligations of employers to keep their employees, staff, contractors, vendors, and volunteers safe and secure when in the workplace, and when traveling on company business.

According to International SOS, their 2024 Risk Outlook Report, created to identify top concerns that organizations are expected to face in the coming year, showed that seventy-five percent of surveyed organizations stated their employees voiced the desire for an increased duty of care at their places of work. With these increased expectations and the increased violence in our society, making “Duty of Care” a priority for your organization should be paramount.

Should a firm not take duty of care seriously, when an act of violence does occur, that firm can be held criminally and civilly responsible and liable.

At the heart of duty of care lies a commitment to creating a safe and secure environment where employees can work without fear of harm or negligence. Recognizing and prioritizing duty of care creates an environment of trust, loyalty, and productivity, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

To effectively prioritize duty of care in the workplace, organizations must adopt proactive measures that address all aspects of workplace safety, including active shooter and workplace violence. Each organization’s specific duty of care plan will depend on several factors, including what industry the company is operating, how many employees work on-site, how many work shifts, where the organization is located, employee’s individual risks, and many other factors. It is imperative the C-suite leaders communicate plans and procedures (written and readily available to all employees) that prioritize employee safety while following the strategies below.

Safety & Security Starts at the Top

Leadership sets the tone for prioritizing duty of care. Making the safety and security of your people the primary goal and priority **MUST** be shown at the highest level. Leading by example allows CEO’s and managers to demonstrate a strong commitment to safety through their words and actions. Making safety and security a part of every board meeting, all-employees conferences, staff meetings, etc. communicates to your people the commitment the firm’s leaders have to their employees’ well-being. Allocation of adequate resources and support to safety initiatives, along with holding individuals accountable for adherence to safety standards, reinforces the organization's commitment to safety and allows duty of care to remain at the forefront of the organization's values. The CEO’s goal is to develop a corporate culture for safety.

Physical Security Vulnerability Assessments and the mitigation of identified risks

Begin by conducting a thorough “Security Vulnerability Assessment” (SVA) to identify risks and potential threats. Bringing in outside experts with a new and clear perspective often helps in identifying risks that may go unrecognized by security staff members. These SVAs will identify potential hazards and vulnerabilities that may impact the operation of an organization and its employees and will provide solutions on how best to mitigate these risks.

Developing protocols and procedures to effectively mitigate identified risks, ensuring the safety of employees and the physical environment is a priority. Install physical security enhancements to include artificial intelligence in your surveillance cameras to identify weapons, firearms, fire, flooding, theft, and other threats or acts of violence. Establish yearly reviews to assess what new threats may impact your organization and adapt plans accordingly to account for evolving circumstances and emerging threats. Stay informed and up-to-speed on innovative technology and security advancements to enhance the security posture of your firm. If we can make our workplaces “fire resistant,” we can make our workplaces “violence resistant.”

Training & Education of the Workforce

The physical safety and security enhancements surrounding your firm are only as good as the training that your employees receive in equipping them to respond correctly to critical incidents. By training your employees with the necessary mindset, knowledge, and skills through a comprehensive training program, you empower them to act when action is needed. Through training and education of your employees, you can make them all part of the security team by recognizing pre-incident indicators to violence, having good situational awareness, and providing them with a mechanism in reporting suspicious behavior.

Providing education on topics such as survival mindset, situational awareness, emergency response, hazard recognition, and mental health awareness will enable your employees to be a force multiplier for your security team. It is also important to encourage ongoing learning and skill development to enable effective handling of diverse, critical situations and ensure duty of care is a priority for all employees.

Communications is key

Develop a “reporting portal” for employees to report suspicious behavior, provide feedback, and report security incidents and violations. Ensure the C-suite leaders foster a culture of open communication where employees feel encouraged to express their concerns. Establish multiple channels for communication, including anonymous reporting systems and regular team and one-on-one meetings. Listening to employees' feedback and promptly addressing issues demonstrates a commitment to their safety and security.

Investing in a “mass notification” system which can instantaneously inform ALL your employees and staff, as well as notifying local police, fire, and emergency services of a critical incident is also a key component to the communication requirement.

Stay Up-to-Date

Regular vulnerability assessments, audits, and compliance checks are necessary to ensure adherence to safety regulations and organizational policies. Promptly addressing non-compliance issues and implementing corrective actions will help to prevent reoccurrence of these issues. Staying updated on technology, regulatory changes, security advances, and revising corporate security plans and policies is imperative and ensures ongoing compliance with industry best practices. Regular audits and compliance checks will also help to protect your firm against legal and liability concerns.

Continuous improvement in safety practices and procedures is paramount, especially considering the influx of millions of unvetted, unchecked, illegal immigrants, the increasing rise of violence, active shooter threats, global security incidents, and national economic pressures. Encouraging open communication among employees and empowering them to suggest and implement enhancements to existing safety measures is essential for a safer working environment. By soliciting feedback and carefully assessing employees' needs, organizations can develop more effective duty of care plans tailored to their specific needs.

Additionally, prioritizing the duty of care within the workplace goes beyond simply meeting ethical and legal requirements. It involves getting the entire workforce to “buy in” on making safety and security a priority. The safety and well-being of employees needs to become a corporate value regardless of what industry the company operates.

*Greg Shaffer is the author of “[Stay Safe – Security Secrets for Today’s Dangerous World](#)” and the founder of the Dallas-based **Shaffer Security Group (SSG)**. Greg is internationally recognized as an expert on Active Shooter & Counter Terrorism. Greg also served 20 years as a Special Agent in the FBI, where he was an Operator on their elite “Hostage Rescue Team” (HRT). He has conducted tactical operations across the globe and has trained thousands of police officers and civilians both domestically and abroad in Active Shooter Response & Tactical Firearms. Most recently he has joined forces with Chris Grollnek at the **Active Shooter Prevention Project, LLC (ASPP)**, where they are working to end the scourge of school shootings by focusing on prevention first. Please follow #NEVERHERE for more information on the premier active shooter prevention solution and education company dedicated to enacting the first national standard to prevent and survive and active shooter event.*

