

# SAFETY MEMO

June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – Violence from External Sources

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## Incident Description

Many organizations offices are shared workspaces in publicly accessible buildings. There are often multiple businesses in the same building and members of the public can frequent the building.

During the incident reported a business operating next door to the witness office experienced verbal and physical violence from one of their clients. Employees at work in the office heard yelling in the hallway and the sound of breaking glass. An employee went to investigate.

The upset client from the neighboring business had attempted to punch a hole through some safety glass, cutting his hand in the process. The police were called to perform an investigation and take statements from the people affected by the incident.

## Human Factor Issues

- Client from a neighboring business was upset
- The client raised his voice in a threatening tone. Verbal aggression turned to physical violence by punching the glass.
- No security personnel on site to intervene

## Design Challenges

- Multiple clients and business users in the building
- Cannot deny entry to people accessing other businesses in the building
- The outside doors to the building cannot be locked
- Internal doors to the witness office can be locked to prevent unauthorized access

## Possible Consequences

- Witness office employees could have been targeted by the individual.
- Other businesses in the building could have been targeted as well.
- Violence could have escalated to include physical harm to people.

## Lessons Learned

When working in publicly accessible buildings, employees should be aware of potential external violence safety incidents. Some ways to ensure employees are kept safe:

- Ensure external doors are kept closed and locked to outsiders
- Post emergency contact information in a visible place for employees to access. Be sure to include
  - Emergency services contact number (911 in North America and 112 in Europe)
  - A senior management contact info
  - The health and safety officers name and phone
  - Contact information for Human Resources personnel
  - A map to the nearest hospital or health center
- Ensure employees are trained and aware of emergency response requirements
  - Only trained professionals should intervene when there is a threat of violence or other emergency needs



Picture 1: Cracked Glass, courtesy of iStock by Getty Images