



WHOLESALE-DISTRIBUTOR PEER RESOURCE SERIES

Peer resources are developed by United Fresh members and represent the views of the author.

KEEPING OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSETS SAFE

By David Fahndrich and Al Tong, Safety Team Members, Pacific Coast Fruit Company

"Four walls and a roof make a building, but people make a business."

– Emil Nemarnik, Founder of Pacific Coast Fruit Company

KEEPING OUR PEOPLE SAFE

Our team members are our greatest asset. We have workplace safety programs for fire, earthquake and industrial safety. But currently, we are not fully prepared for a violent casualty incident. Sadly, the potential of violent casualty incidents has become a very real threat that all companies must be prepared to address.

Our two warehouse facilities are in inner city and industrial locations. The growth and crowding around both facilities have led to increased confrontations between our employees and uninvited visitors. In the last 12 months, we have had several situations in both our Oregon and Washington locations. These include:

- 1) A disgruntled former employee showing up with a firearm in his waistband.
- 2) Another employee who quit, had made a statement three weeks prior, that if he was forced to quit, he would, "come back, and shoot the place up."
- 3) A mentally disturbed man followed another person into our Will Call area, and then proceeded to cause a disturbance.
- 4) We have had several incidents of uninvited visitors inside our employee parking lot. Most leave when asked, but we have had two that were argumentative and threatening.

These are just some examples of things that we have faced. Due to these situations, the senior leadership of Pacific Coast Fruit Company has made the decision to actively pursue a strategy to address potential future workplace violence.

Our initial analysis quickly determined the need for implementing improved building infrastructure, technology systems and employee training programs to deal with the potential threats that exist. We have identified three primary areas to review and update or upgrade.

FACILITIES EXTERIOR

We are upgrading our door ways to restrict entry into our facilities. This would include having all employees enter the building with a picture ID badge with RFID capabilities enabling us to control access.

We have an employee monitoring the main parking lot from 4:00am to 12:00pm. After 5:00 pm, the gates are locked, and entry can only be gained by accessing the code on a key-pad.

All front doors are locked, and all non-employees are directed to enter the building through our "Will-Call" door. When someone approaches that door, they acknowledged and need to be "buzzed in" by someone at the desk. This includes all employees and visitors.

FACILITIES INTERIOR

Our buildings are designed to be open and inviting. A walk-through audit of our rooms, hallways and work spaces has revealed several opportunities for improvement. Room changes can include furniture selection, furniture placement, decorative/concealment window treatments, door locks/stops and other environmental tools. In most offices, the desk furniture now includes a hidden pepper spray gel.

We are adding additional first-aid stations through-out our buildings and each station will be upgraded to include basic trauma care. These kits will include items such as tourniquets and compression wraps.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING

We are currently researching communications options for public address (PA), phone apps and telephony systems. Immediate broadcast of accurate information is critical in a violent casualty event. Our goal to have a simple broadcast PA option and a text/email application. We believe that a combination of these communication tools would be the most effective method to reach our employees.

Infrastructure improvements just part of the solution. The most critical paradigm shift is training our employees on how to identify and react to a potential threat.

Our research for a work place safety and active shooter training solution led us to select ALICE Training. Their philosophy and training empower people to identify, think, react and survive.

ALICE is an acronym for: Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate. This is not sequential list of tasks. It is a list of the options that we should all know how to use. These 5 tools form the foundation for a pro-active, multiple option response that anyone can do.



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The 2-day class consisted of a combination of instruct lecture/discussion, slides, videos and hands on scenario training. We learned about national statistics on shootings, shooter profiles, percentages of hits and survivability. We analyzed active shooter events, on scene reactions and the tragic results. Most of all, we learned skills and knowledge on what to recognize and how to respond to a violent incident.

SUMMARY

Workplace safety has a new meaning. What we once thought was not possible in the workplace is now a potential risk. Existing ideas and responses (lock down in place, wait for first responders) are outdated and can lead to tragic and deadly results. We highly recommend that you review your business infrastructure, adopt a new safety training methodology and empower your team to quickly identify and react dynamically to a violent casualty incident.

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