

County of Cumberland Board of Chosen Freeholders	Policy Number: 4.20	Pages: 1 of 3
Chapter: General Procedures		Effective Date: March 12, 1998
Subject: Violence in the Workplace		

I. POLICY:

Violence or the threat of violence will not be tolerated in any Cumberland County work location. Cumberland County Government shall work with law enforcement to aid in the prosecution of anyone outside the organization who commits violent acts against employees. No employee acting in good faith, who reports real or implied violent behavior will be subject to retaliation or harassment based upon their report. County Government is committed to providing a coordinated and rapid response to such incidents.

II. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Deadly Weapon: Includes all firearms such as handguns, rifles and shotguns. The term also includes any explosive devices. Knives, other cutting tools, clubs or other devices such as defensive mace and stun guns may be considered deadly weapons when brandished, used or threatened to be used in an offensive or aggressive manner.
- B. Altercation: Includes actual workplace violence or threatened violence including verbal or physical confrontation or assault, or attempts at such assault.

III. PROCEDURE:

A. Weapons at Work

1. Possession, use or threat of use of a deadly weapon is not permitted on County property, including County vehicles, in County owned, leased or rented facilities or in private vehicles parked on County property. An exemption will exist when possession or use of a weapon is a necessary and approved requirement of the person's job classification.
2. In addition to the County property defined above, desks, briefcases, purses, packages and similar containers as well as private vehicles parked on County property are subject to search when the County has reasonable grounds to believe an employee may be in violation of this policy.

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3. Refusal to permit a search of property, as described above, shall be cause for disciplinary action.

B. Critical Incident Coordination

1. In immediate emergency situations call 911. As with any other emergency involving fire, violence or medical situations, the action must be to call “911” and report as many details as possible so that the appropriate emergency response units can be dispatched.
2. Contact the Personnel Director. The Personnel Director or his designate will ensure that other resources such as the employee assistance program, labor union, employee benefits, county counsel, etc. are coordinated in response to the incident.

C. Guidelines for Responding to Violent or Potentially Violent Incidents:

Altercations between persons at work are rare and usually minor, allowing time for supervisory intervention. It is understood that the actions of a manager or other employees will be dependent on the seriousness of the situation and the nature of an altercation. However, consistent with personal safety, managers and supervisors have a responsibility to make a good faith effort to defuse violent or potentially violent situations as quickly as possible in order to prevent their escalation and creating a threat to others. In general:

1. Separate employees involved. Do not allow a verbal altercation to escalate into something more serious. If the employees cannot be separated, call 911 and follow the steps previously described.
2. Contact the appropriate department/division head and the Personnel Director.
3. Once the incident is under control, separately interview all persons involved, including any witnesses in order to obtain an accurate account of the incident. Document the statements of witnesses and others interviewed in written form. Those involved in an altercation, who may be the subject of disciplinary action have a right to be represented during the interview. It may be necessary to postpone an interview in such cases until a union representative is available.

D. Discipline:

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1. Most workplace altercations, including minor ones involving only verbal exchanges, justify appropriate disciplinary action using the County's progressive discipline policy.
2. If the incident is serious enough that possible termination could result and the continued presence of the employee at the work site would be inappropriate given the circumstances, the employee may be immediately suspended **without** pay and ordered not to return to the work site until further notice. This action may be taken with department head **and** Personnel Director approval.