

Armoured Car Shootings a Reminder of Workplace Violence Duties



Workers in certain jobs, such as law enforcement and security, are more vulnerable to violence than others. In fact, for these kinds of professions, violence may be the top safety hazard they face. Usually the threat of violence to cops and security guards comes from outside—not from their co-workers. But a recent tragedy demonstrates that workplace violence can come from many fronts.

Four Guards Shot by Co-Worker

On June 15 at the University of Alberta, an armoured car with a crew of security guards from G4S Security was on campus to restock a bank machine. One of the guards, Travis Baumgartner, shot his four co-workers, killing three and seriously wounding the fourth. He then fled with \$334,000. The police arrested him the next day as he tried to cross the border into the US.

Should G4S Security have known that Baumgartner posed a threat? The company claims that all employees are trained and subjected to background checks before being authorized to carry a gun.

But a few days after the shootings, the company [announced](#) that it's conducting an internal investigation and will rewrite its safety policies and procedures if necessary. For example, the union that represents security guards, has suggested that more

in-depth psychological analysis might be necessary to help weed out potentially dangerous workers.

In an interesting twist, less than two weeks before the attack, on the Facebook page of a man with the name Travis Baumgartner, a post appeared saying, "I wonder if I'd make the six o'clock news if I just starting popping people off."

It's unclear whether this Facebook page actually belongs to the alleged shooter and, if it does, whether his employer was aware of it. This posting raises the thorny question of where privacy lines should be drawn when it comes to workers' online comments.

If G4S was aware of this posting, it arguably would have a duty to take some sort of action, such as questioning Baumgartner. So does that mean employers should monitor the online comments of all employees' And would such monitoring violate privacy laws'

OHSInsider Resources

To make sure that your company's efforts to protect workers from violence are sufficient, go the OHS Insider's Workplace Violence Compliance Centre where you'll find more information, model tools and videos on this topic.

In addition, a webinar on workplace violence is in the works. So check the [upcoming webinar page](#) for details when they become available.