

# Toronto Incident Shows Potential for Violence when Firing a Worker



Violence can erupt in a workplace for various reasons. For example, outsiders may become violent in trying to rob the workplace. Co-workers could get into an argument that turns physical. An employee's disgruntled former spouse could show up at her workplace and attack her.

But there's one work activity that's especially risky: terminating an employee. Being fired is an emotional and unpleasant experience, which can lead some individuals to snap and lash out'sometimes physically'at those they believe are responsible.

An incident in Toronto is a sad example of such a situation.

In April 2014, Chuang Li went on a stabbing rampage at a Toronto office while being fired. He told the officers arresting him that his victims deserved the attack. Li is charged with three counts of attempted murder, four counts of aggravated assault and four counts of assault with a weapon. His trial began earlier this month.

Li was born in China and immigrated to Canada in 2001, becoming a Canadian citizen in 2005. He was hired by Ceridian as a software developer in June 2012.

In Feb. 2013, Li began carrying a large knife to work in his shoulder bag, saying he didn't feel safe at the office. In June of that year, he bought a pocket knife, which he also took to work. And he bought another knife in March 2014, which he kept in the trunk of his car.

Ceridian decided to fire Li on April 9, 2014. He was called into the office of HR manager Rajsri De, where vice-president of development, James Konandreas, began reviewing his performance issues.

Li started to yell 'shut up" and curse, tried to grab a stapler and a nameplate from De's desk and then pulled out his pocket knife.

He began to stab at both Konandreas and De with the knife. Li stabbed and slashed Konandreas several times before he and De managed to escape from the office.

But Li chased De, who was cornered in a hallway, slashing her face and hands, and stabbing her in the stomach. He then went after Konandreas again when another manager, Scott Berenthal, tried to intervene, receiving a stab wound on the left side of his head.

Bryan Humphries saw the commotion and kicked Li, who then charged at him, stabbing him in the arm, before chasing and stabbing Konandreas once more. Employees in a board room then tried to intervene, with one of them eventually convincing Li to surrender the knife.

As a result of this rampage, four people were taken to the hospital, two of them with life-threatening injuries.

*Bottom line:* Because terminating an employee can be a high risk situation, especially if the worker is being fired for engaging in workplace violence or similar conduct, you may want to have protocols in place in the event the worker responds violently, including having him escorted out of the building by security and having the police on site.

Learn how to establish an effective threat assessment team to evaluate the risk of violence in your workplace in general and in circumstances such as the firing of a worker.

The OHS Insider has additional resources on workplace violence in the Workplace Violence Compliance Centre, including how to train workers on responding to an active shooter and a workplace violence threat assessment checklist.