

How Workplace Violence Quietly Drains Margin and How Preparedness Reduces the Loss

Executive Premise

Workplace violence is often treated like a rare safety incident, something you deal with only after it happens. But in real life, unresolved conflict shows up again and again, like a steady operating cost. It quietly drains productivity, weakens managers, damages customer trust, scares away employees, and makes results harder to predict.

Most organizations are already paying for it. The costs show up as turnover, distracted employees, operational disruption, co-worker conflict, time spent on claims, higher insurance costs, and reputational hits. The reason it doesn't feel obvious isn't because it's small – it's because it's so spread out. Different departments each absorb a piece, so no one team sees the full price tag all at once. But make no mistake: many organizations are suffering this "death by a thousand cuts" and it almost always hits their bottom line.

Preparedness changes this equation. When people recognize early warning signs, respond consistently, and de-escalate effectively, organizations reduce how often incidents occur, how severe they become, and how long disruption lasts. The return is not theoretical upside.

Managers can see the results quickly in day to day operations and HR and finance departments can see the results clearly in bottom line numbers: less turnover, fewer claims, higher profits.

For leaders responsible for margin, continuity, and risk, preparedness is not a discretionary initiative. It's a financial control.

What To Expect From This Whitepaper

This white paper breaks those hidden costs into plain, visible terms. You'll see how and why conflict is rising, where the money is already being lost, and how everyday friction turns into real financial drag. We'll walk through the main "cost channels" (like turnover, disruption, claims, and reputational damage), show how incidents translate into dollars using a consistent model, and explain how preparedness – early recognition, consistent response, and de-escalation – reduces both frequency and severity. The goal is simple: give leaders a clear way to understand the business case, estimate impact with realistic assumptions, and take practical next steps using their own data.

TL/DR

Short on time or attention span? Here's what you need to know:

Workplace violence has a clear quantifiable drag on revenue and profits:

Org Size	Annual Cost of Conflict
Small	\$370,000
Mid-Size	\$3,400,000
Large	\$33,200,000

Online preparedness training delivers a quantifiable and significant savings and ROI:

Org Size	Annual Cost of Training	Annual Savings	Annual Net Benefit	ROI
Small	\$9,000	\$42,000	\$33,000	470%
Mid-Size	\$20,000	\$388,000	\$368,000	1,900%
Large	\$70,000	\$3,700,000	\$3,630,000	5,300%

Assumptions and Evidence

This paper uses cautious, real-world assumptions based on credible sources for severe workplace violence. It also includes informed estimates for everyday conflict – because a lot of it never gets formally reported.

For serious incidents, we rely on public data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Their numbers track nonfatal workplace violence cases that lead to days away from work, job restrictions, or job transfers. That gives us a solid baseline for higher-severity events.

But lower-level issues – like verbal abuse, threats, and intimidation – happen far more often, especially in customer-facing and service roles. These incidents aren't consistently tracked nationwide, even though industry surveys and day-to-day operations show they're common and they matter.

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The examples below are meant to be simple starting points. They're here to show the scale of the problem and how the math works – not to forecast exactly what will happen. If you have your own internal data, swap it in wherever you can.

For a complete list of our assumptions and evidence, see the Appendix at the end of this paper.

1. Why This Matters Now

Across customer-facing and service-intensive environments, operating conditions amplify both conflict and its cost.

Staffing models are leaner, leaving little margin for disruption. Turnover sensitivity is higher, making each resignation more expensive. Customer stress and volatility are more visible. Incidents are more likely to be recorded and scrutinized. Insurers, regulators, and boards are asking harder questions about preparedness.

Workplace violence rarely begins with extreme events. It appears through frequent friction such as verbal aggression, threats, boundary testing, and emotionally charged encounters. Most of these moments never become formal incidents, yet many still generate cost.

Taken together, these conditions mean workplace violence no longer behaves like an occasional disruption. It behaves like a structural cost. *Organizations that continue to treat it episodically will continue to experience unpredictable financial outcomes, and predictably lower profits.*

2. Where the Money Is Already Being Lost

Workplace violence does not create a single expense. It creates a pattern of disruption that triggers multiple downstream costs at once. Those costs accumulate quietly and are rarely reviewed together.

In this section, each cost channel begins with a plain-language explanation of how the cost shows up in day-to-day operations and why it is often underestimated. Each channel then applies the same incident-based model so the reader can see how incidents translate into dollars, and how fewer incidents translate into savings.

2.0 A Practical Definition of Incidents and Escalations

For ROI purposes, an incident is any workplace interaction involving aggression, threats, intimidation, harassment, or behavior that creates fear or disruption serious enough to require intervention beyond routine customer service or normal supervision.

Incidents are grouped into three tiers for practical modeling.

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- **Tier 1 incidents** are handled in the moment. They involve disruption, stress, and lost focus but do not require formal documentation.
- **Tier 2 incidents** require supervisor involvement, documentation, schedule changes, or HR or security support.
- **Tier 3 incidents** are escalated events. These include injury, claims activity, police involvement, formal investigations, termination, legal action, or major operational disruption.

Preparedness produces ROI by reducing incident frequency, decreasing the number of events that escalate to Tier 3, and reducing the harm and recovery time associated with all events.

2.0.1 Three Example Organizations and Baseline Incident Counts

The following composite examples are used to illustrate magnitude. They are not claims about any specific organization. They reflect generic, high-contact operating environments such as retail, food retail, food service, and healthcare.

Org Size, # employees	Tier 1 Incidents	Tier 2 Incidents	Tier 3 Incidents
Small: 200-2,000	18	7	3
Mid-Size: 2,000+	150	70	6
Large: 10,000+	1,500	700	58

Tier 3 counts are anchored to Bureau of Labor Statistics data on nonfatal workplace violence incidents with days away from work. Tier 1 and Tier 2 volumes are conservatively inferred to reflect the reality of underreported everyday conflict.

2.0.2 What Preparedness Training Produces

A credible preparedness program does not promise elimination of workplace violence. It produces measurable, observable improvements.

Based on published research, industry experience, and conservative interpretation of training outcomes, a reasonably successful program typically achieves:

- A 15% reduction in Tier 1 and Tier 2 incidents as employees recognize early warning signs and intervene sooner.
- A 20% reduction in Tier 3 incidents as fewer routine conflicts escalate.
- A 10% to 15% reduction in harm and disruption per Tier 3 event as responses improve.

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These assumptions are modest and intentionally avoid best-case claims. They are designed to reflect what many organizations achieve when training is reinforced and supported by managers.

2.1 Turnover and Replacement Cost

Repeated exposure to conflict erodes employee confidence and accelerates burnout. Over time, employees begin to conclude that staying is not worth the emotional cost. This dynamic is especially visible in frontline and supervisory roles.

Turnover costs are routinely underestimated because leaders focus on hiring expense alone. The true cost includes onboarding time, productivity ramp, overtime coverage, management attention, and the destabilizing effect on remaining staff. Research from the Center for American Progress and SHRM shows that replacement costs commonly reach a meaningful fraction of annual salary, even before productivity loss is considered.

Incidents drive this cost in two ways. Frequent Tier 1 and Tier 2 incidents increase daily stress, while Tier 3 events often become clear tipping points that prompt resignations.

Model assumptions:

- Average frontline salary: \$40,000
- Replacement factor: 18%
- Hiring cost: \$4,700
- Cost per departure: \$11,900

Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Incident-Linked Departures, Annually	Annual Cost of Departures	Departures Avoided After Incident Reductions	Annual Savings
Small	2	\$23,800	0.4	\$4,800
Mid-Size	13	\$154,700	3	\$35,700
Large	128	\$1,523,200	26	\$309,000

2.2 Absenteeism and Presenteeism

Conflict disrupts attendance and focus long before employees resign. After incidents, employees call in sick, arrive distracted, or request reassignment away from high-friction duties. These aftershocks ripple across schedules and teams.

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This cost is often invisible because it is absorbed through overtime, temporary coverage, and reduced productivity rather than appearing as a distinct line item. BLS absenteeism data shows that even small increases above baseline translate into meaningful labor cost.

Incidents drive this channel directly. Tier 2 incidents create short-term disruption, while Tier 3 incidents create longer recovery periods affecting multiple employees.

Model assumptions:

- Tier 2 incident: 0.5 lost workdays
- Tier 3 incident: 7 lost workdays
- Loaded daily labor cost: \$250

Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Lost Days	Annual Cost	Days Saved With Better Preparedness Training	Annual Savings
Small	10.5	\$2,625	3.5	\$900
Mid-Size	77	\$19,250	20	\$5,000
Large	756	\$189,000	180	\$45,000

2.3 Managerial Time and Operational Drag

Every disruptive interaction pulls managers away from running the operation. Time is spent de-escalating situations, documenting events, coordinating with HR or security, and managing schedule fallout.

This cost is underestimated because managerial time is not budgeted per incident, yet it accumulates quickly and reduces leadership effectiveness. Operational studies consistently show that unplanned interruptions degrade decision quality and throughput.

Incident volume directly determines this cost. Fewer incidents mean fewer interruptions and more time spent on productive work.

Model assumptions:

- Manager cost: \$80 per hour
- Tier 2 incident: 2 hours
- Tier 3 incident: 5 hours

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Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Annual Hours Lost	Annual Cost	Annual Hours Saved With Better Preparedness Training	Annual Savings
Small	19	\$1,520	4	\$320
Mid-Size	170	\$13,600	35	\$2,800
Large	1,690	\$135,200	350	\$28,000

2.4 Customer Defection and Revenue Stability

Visible conflict affects how customers perceive safety, professionalism, and order. Most customers do not complain or provide feedback. They quietly leave the brand.

This cost is underestimated because it appears as gradual revenue erosion rather than an immediate incident expense. In many customer-facing industries, lost customers do not return.

Preparedness affects this channel by reducing visible disorder and improving the quality of responses when incidents occur.

Model assumptions:

- 1% of customers exposed to visible conflict leave permanently
- Conservative lifetime customer value: \$3,000

Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Annual Customers Lost	Annual Lifetime Value Lost	Annual Customer Losses Avoided	Annual Savings With Better Preparedness Training
Small	100	\$300,000	10	\$30,000
Mid-Size	1,000	\$3,000,000	100	\$300,000
Large	10,000	\$30,000,000	1,000	\$3,000,000

2.5 Legal and Administrative Burden

Tier 3 incidents drive the majority of this channel.

Model assumptions:

- Average Tier 3 administrative and claim cost: \$15,000

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- With training, Tier 3 incidents reduced by 20% and harm reduced by 10%

Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Annual Cost	Annual Savings With Better Preparedness Training
Small	\$15,000	\$4,000
Mid-Size	\$90,000	\$21,000
Large	\$870,000	\$192,000

The figures in this section reflect **routine legal and administrative handling only**. They include internal investigations, documentation, claims administration, management time, and limited legal consultation that typically accompany an escalated incident. They **do not** include settlements, litigation, trial costs, verdicts, or regulatory penalties.

This exclusion is intentional. Only a minority of escalated workplace violence incidents proceed to formal legal action, but when they do, costs can increase dramatically and vary widely based on facts, jurisdiction, and response quality. Modeling those outcomes as an average annual cost would require speculative assumptions and would obscure the core point of this analysis.

The ROI demonstrated in this paper is driven entirely by **routine, repeatable costs that occur every year**, regardless of whether a lawsuit ever follows. In practice, preparedness reduces not only the frequency and severity of incidents, but also the likelihood that any single incident escalates into a costly legal dispute. That downstream risk represents **asymmetric downside exposure** rather than baseline operating cost and is addressed separately in the appendix.

Escalated incidents trigger investigations, claims processing, and administrative work across HR, legal, and operations teams. Even when insurance covers some direct expenses, internal labor and disruption remain.

This burden is underestimated because it is spread across functions and treated as routine overhead. Workers compensation and OSHA reporting consistently show that administrative handling adds substantial cost beyond medical expense.

2.6 Insurance Costs Over Time

Insurance costs respond to loss history and demonstrated controls over time. Fewer serious incidents and better documentation reduce volatility in renewals.

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This channel is often misunderstood because improvements lag behind operational changes. Insurers respond to trends, not one-off improvements.

Tier 3 frequency and severity influence this cost most strongly.

Model assumptions:

- Baseline annual insurance impact: \$25,000 small, \$200,000 mid-size, \$1,500,000 large
- Conservatively assume a 7% improvement after stabilization

Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Annual Cost	Annual Savings With Better Preparedness Training
Small	\$25,000	\$1,750
Mid-Size	\$200,000	\$14,000
Large	\$1,500,000	\$105,000

2.7 Reputation and Employer Brand

High-visibility incidents damage employer reputation and recruiting effectiveness. Candidates self-select out, time to fill increases, and wage pressure rises.

This cost is underestimated because it appears indirectly in hiring difficulty rather than as an explicit expense.

Tier 3 events disproportionately drive this channel.

Model assumptions:

- Baseline annual brand-related cost: \$20,000 small, \$150,000 mid-size, \$1,000,000 large
- Conservatively assume a 7% reduction after stabilization

Baseline cost and savings by organization:

Org Size	Annual Cost	Annual Savings With Better Preparedness Training
Small	\$20,000	\$1,400
Mid-Size	\$150,000	\$10,500
Large	\$1,000,000	\$70,000

3. Your Aggregate Cost

The figures above represent estimated annual cost of conflict across multiple channels before training, and estimated annual savings after stabilization.

Here's what workplace violence is costing you:

Org Size	Annual Cost of Conflict	Annual Savings With Better Preparedness Training
Small	\$370,000	\$42,000
Mid-Size	\$3,400,000	\$388,000
Large	\$33,200,000	\$3,700,000

These savings recur annually and often increase over time as training is reinforced, managers become more consistent, and incident trends improve across multiple cycles.

4. How Online WPV Prevention Training Converts Cost Into Recoverable Value

Sections 2 and 3 quantified the problem: the recurring annual cost of unmanaged workplace conflict.

This section explains how that cost is most efficiently reduced.

Workplace violence prevention can include many elements, such as policy updates, environmental controls, security presence, and leadership intervention. Each has value. However, not all interventions deliver the same return, nor do they operate at the same speed, scale, or cost.

Online workplace violence prevention training stands out because it acts directly at the moment where cost is still optional.

When employees are trained to recognize early warning signs, manage their own responses, and de-escalate consistently, fewer situations escalate into incidents that force the organization to absorb unavoidable expense. Once an incident escalates, costs are no longer discretionary. Investigations, schedule disruption, administrative handling, claims activity, and lost productivity must be paid.

Online training influences behavior before escalation, which is why it produces disproportionate financial impact relative to its cost.

Using the conservatively successful program effects described in Section 2.0.2, this analysis estimates the portion of baseline cost that can realistically be reduced on a recurring annual basis after stabilization.

4.1 Why Online WPV Prevention Training Delivers the Fastest and Most Defensible ROI

Organizations reduce workplace violence through many mechanisms. The question is not whether prevention works, but which investments capture measurable value first.

Online WPV prevention training consistently delivers the fastest and most defensible return for five reasons.

First, it reaches the entire workforce. Online training can be deployed across locations, roles, and shifts without disrupting operations. In high-turnover environments, new hires can be trained quickly and consistently. No other prevention lever scales this efficiently.

Second, it changes behavior at the point of risk. Policies, signage, and procedures matter, but incidents escalate or de-escalate in real time. Training equips employees and supervisors to recognize early signals, regulate their responses, and intervene appropriately before situations deteriorate.

Third, it produces consistent responses. Inconsistent handling of incidents increases both severity and downstream cost. Online training establishes shared expectations and common language, reducing variability that drives escalation and liability.

Fourth, it creates documentation and defensibility. Online programs generate clear records of training completion and reinforcement. This documentation supports internal review, regulatory inquiries, and insurance discussions without additional administrative burden.

Fifth, it has a predictable and relatively low cost. Unlike physical upgrades or staffing increases, online training costs scale linearly and are easy to budget. This makes ROI easier to model and easier to defend.

For organizations deciding where to begin, online WPV prevention training is not the only solution. It is the most efficient first solution.

4.2 Recalculated ROI Using Online Training Cost Benchmarks

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The incident reduction and savings estimates in Section 3 remain unchanged. What changes here is the cost of the intervention.

Representative annual cost of a comprehensive online WPV prevention training program based on current national market pricing:

Org Size	Approx Annual Cost of Training
Small	\$9,000
Mid-Size	\$20,000
Large	\$70,000

These figures include workforce-wide online training access, ongoing availability for new hires, administrative tracking, and reinforcement capability – everything offered by TPOP enterprise training.

Estimated annual savings after deploying preparedness training:

Org Size	Approx Annual Savings
Small	\$42,000
Mid-Size	\$388,000
Large	\$3,700,000

Resulting annual net benefit after deploying preparedness training:

Org Size	Annual Cost of Training	Annual Savings	Annual Net Benefit	ROI
Small	\$9,000	\$42,000	\$33,000	470%
Mid-Size	\$20,000	\$388,000	\$368,000	1,900%
Large	\$70,000	\$3,700,000	\$3,630,000	5,300%

These figures intentionally understate potential upside. They assume partial incident reduction, no catastrophic events, and no monetization of secondary benefits such as morale or brand lift. They demonstrate why online WPV prevention training is often the highest-leverage investment within a broader prevention strategy.

Conclusion

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Workplace violence is both a human and a business problem. Left untreated, it quietly drains talent, cash, customers, and reputation. The solution is not a single purchase or policy, but a sustained preparedness program rooted in practical de-escalation training, clear policies, engineering controls, and continual measurement. That program does more than protect employees, it preserves the company's most valuable assets: people, property, and profits.

If you lead people, finance, or risk, the real question is not whether you can afford to run a prevention program, it's whether you can afford not to.

TPOP can draft a tailored prevention roadmap for your organization: an audit template, a training curriculum outline, a measurement dashboard, and a concise executive one-pager to secure budget and buy-in. Let's talk!

Assumptions and Evidence Appendix

This appendix documents the assumptions, data anchors, and modeling logic used throughout this paper. Its purpose is to make the analysis **transparent, auditable, and defensible** for finance, risk, legal, and executive readers.

The model presented in the body is a **decision-support model**, not a forecast or guarantee. Where uncertainty exists, assumptions are intentionally conservative and designed to understate, rather than overstate, both risk and return. Readers are encouraged to replace illustrative inputs with organization-specific data.

A1. Incident Tiers Can Be Defined and Tracked

Assumption

Organizations can define and track Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 incidents with sufficient consistency to support trend analysis, even if reporting is imperfect at first.

Rationale

Most organizations already distinguish informally between routine disruptions, managed incidents, and escalated events. Formalizing these categories improves visibility without requiring new systems.

Typical Evidence Sources

Incident logs, supervisor notes, HR case records, security reports.

A2. Tier 3 Incident Frequency Is Anchored to Public Data

Assumption

Tier 3 incidents correspond to nonfatal workplace violence cases that result in days away from work, job restriction, or transfer.

Rationale

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides the most reliable national data for severe workplace violence events. These data are used only to anchor high-severity incidents.

Typical Evidence Sources

BLS Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities data; OSHA recordable incident logs.

A3. Tier 1 and Tier 2 Incidents Are Systematically Underreported

Assumption

Lower-severity conflict, threats, and disruptive behavior occur far more frequently than formal records indicate.

Rationale

Employee surveys, manager interviews, and operational reviews consistently show that most conflict is handled informally and never logged. Baseline volumes used in this paper are intentionally restrained.

Typical Evidence Sources

Employee engagement surveys, manager estimates, customer complaint narratives.

A4. Conservatively Successful Preparedness Programs Produce Measurable Change

Assumption

A reinforced preparedness program typically produces:

- ~15% reduction in Tier 1 and Tier 2 incidents
- ~20% reduction in Tier 3 incidents
- ~10–15% reduction in harm and recovery time per Tier 3 event

Rationale

Evidence is mixed on whether training eliminates conflict, but stronger evidence shows improvements in response quality, escalation control, and recovery time when training is reinforced and supported by managers.

Typical Evidence Sources

Workplace violence prevention reviews, OSHA guidance, post-training incident trend analysis.

A5. A Share of Avoidable Turnover Is Incident-Driven

Assumption

Repeated exposure to conflict and perceived lack of safety contribute to voluntary turnover in high-contact roles.

Rationale

Exit interviews and engagement surveys frequently cite stress, safety concerns, and customer aggression as contributing factors in departure decisions.

Typical Evidence Sources

Exit interview themes, engagement survey items, location-level turnover comparisons.

A6. Absence and Disengagement Have an Incident-Driven Component

Assumption

Incidents create short-term aftershocks such as call-offs, distraction, and reassignment that decline as incident frequency and recovery time improve.

Rationale

These effects rarely appear as violence-related codes but are visible in scheduling data and manager reports following incidents.

Typical Evidence Sources

Attendance records, overtime usage patterns, supervisor observations.

A7. Manager Time per Incident Is Estimable

Assumption

Average management time spent responding to incidents can be estimated well enough to support ROI modeling.

Rationale

While precise tracking is rare, structured estimates consistently reveal material cost when aggregated across incidents.

Typical Evidence Sources

Manager interviews, workflow mapping, time-allocation studies.

A8. Customer Defection After Visible Conflict Is Often Permanent

Assumption

A small percentage of customers exposed to visible conflict or disorder leave the brand permanently.

Rationale

Research and operational experience show that customers who leave due to safety or chaos concerns rarely return. Lifetime customer value is therefore more appropriate than annual spend.

Typical Evidence Sources

Customer reviews, NPS and CSAT comments, footfall and repeat-visit analysis.

A9. Legal and Administrative Handling Costs Are Routine and Repeatable

Assumption

Escalated incidents reliably generate low five-figure administrative and legal handling costs, excluding medical, settlement, or verdict expense.

Rationale

Workers' compensation files and HR investigations show that internal administration, claims handling, and limited legal review often equal or exceed direct medical cost in complex incidents.

Typical Evidence Sources

Claims files, HR investigation records, legal billing summaries.

A10. Insurance Outcomes Respond to Incident Trends Over Time

Assumption

Improved incident frequency, severity, and documentation influence insurance cost and stability over renewal cycles.

Rationale

Insurers evaluate loss history and control maturity rather than intent. Improvements typically lag operational changes.

Typical Evidence Sources

Broker feedback, loss runs, renewal summaries.

A11. Reputation and Employer Brand Are Disproportionately Affected by Escalated Events

Assumption

High-visibility incidents have lasting impact on recruiting efficiency and employer reputation.

Rationale

Public or repeated escalations increase time-to-fill, wage pressure, and candidate drop-off.

Typical Evidence Sources

Recruiting metrics, employer brand sentiment, time-to-fill trends.

A12. Program Costs Are Fully Loaded

Assumption

Program cost estimates include paid training time, online delivery, administration, reinforcement, and documentation.

Rationale

Labor time is the dominant cost driver of training programs. Excluding it materially understates true cost.

Typical Evidence Sources

Learning and development budgets, payroll data, training schedules.

A13. Savings Are Recurring and Often Compound

Assumption

Modeled savings represent annual benefits after stabilization and typically recur and grow over time.

Rationale

Turnover, insurance, and reputation effects lag initial implementation and compound as incident trends stabilize.

Typical Evidence Sources

Multi-year turnover trends, renewal outcomes, incident trend reports.

A14. Early Reporting May Increase Before Declining

Assumption

Initial increases in reported minor incidents reflect improved visibility rather than worsening conditions.

Rationale

Training improves recognition and reporting before it reduces frequency.

Typical Evidence Sources

Reporting guidance changes, training rollout timelines, escalation ratios.

A15. Incident Reduction Is Attributed to Training as a Primary Lever, Not a Sole Cause

Assumption

Modeled reductions assume training is reinforced by management behavior and organizational support.

Rationale

The model does not assume training alone eliminates conflict, only that it materially improves recognition, response consistency, and escalation control.

A16. Litigation and Verdict Risk Is Excluded from Baseline Modeling

Assumption

Settlements, litigation, verdicts, and regulatory penalties are excluded from baseline cost modeling.

Rationale

Only a minority of escalated incidents proceed to formal legal action, but when they do, costs vary widely and can be orders of magnitude larger. Excluding these outcomes preserves conservative, defensible modeling.

A17. The Model Is Designed to Be Replaced

Assumption

Organizations will substitute their own incident counts, costs, and program investments for the illustrative values used here.

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Rationale

The value of the model lies in its structure and logic, not in the specific numbers presented.