

## Job shootings aren't so rare, local firms told

Expert: Jeep case like others

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The Jan. 26 multiple shooting at the DaimlerChrysler Jeep factory in North Toledo was not all that rare, a national expert on workplace violent crime told about 200 area business leaders yesterday.

Paul Michael Viollis, Sr., president of Risk Control Strategies, of New York, said general aspects are consistent with about 3,000 cases he has studied for 20 years. He declined to discuss specifics.

Mr. Viollis said a steady increase in workplace violence has "clearly hit epidemic proportions here in the United States."

There are now an average of 17 workplace homicides a week. Many go unnoticed by the national media unless multiple victims are involved. Many involve women who have been victims of domestic abuse, he said.

His talk, sponsored by Sky Insurance and held in the Medical College of Ohio's Dana Center, was split into two similar half-day forums because of the level of interest Sky received in advance, John Wingerter, event coordinator, said.

Mr. Wingerter, a Sky training coordinator, said the forum was geared toward educating human resource directors on behavioral cues in the aftermath of the Jeep shootings. Former Jeep employee Myles Meyers killed himself with a gun after fatally shooting a supervisor, Roy "Tom" Thacker, as well as wounding team leader Paul Medlen and Michael Toney, another supervisor.

Mr. Viollis said none of the homicides he has studied has been random.

"Workplace violence is always avoidable," he said.

Perpetrators not only exhibit signs of erratic behavior, but usually even boast about their plans to peers. Those who are tipped off usually don't take the threats seriously.

Eighty-six percent of the victims are management. Although 98 percent of the workplace perpetrators are male, 35 percent of the violence in schools is done by females. Nearly all perpetrators have felt bullied or demoralized.

Mr. Viollis said there is a direct correlation between school and workplace violence.

"Not only are we not addressing this issue [in the workplace], we're seeding it [in the schools]," he said. "Treating school violence is your problem, whether you've got kids in school or not."

The toll of violence extends to a company's profit margin: A homicide typically causes a 15 percent reduction in company stock for several weeks as well as lost work days and productivity. The need for enhanced security consumes more resources. The average jury award to victims or their surviving family members is \$3.1 million per person, per incident. Legal expenses for major cases can exceed \$400,000, Mr. Viollis said.

State legislators, he said, are reluctant to challenge the Second Amendment. In Ohio, employees can still legally take loaded weapons to work unless their employers display placards forbidding them. Oklahoma has a law that forbids companies from disciplining anyone who takes a weapon onto work premises. Mr. Viollis described the latter as "the most ludicrous, most irresponsible piece of legislation I've ever seen."