

Awareness, intervention keep JSC free of workplace aggression

JSC is one of the best places to work. According to a survey of federal employees, NASA was ranked the most satisfying federal workplace in America. Our ranks are filled with bright, professional, well-taken-care-of individuals. We have a management team that makes our safety our highest priority and we all work on high-profile projects that are endeared by people the world-over.

Because of some of these factors, NASA is very fortunate to have a very low occurrence rate of workplace assault or violence. However, our comfort level should not transcend into complacency.

Increasing awareness of the causes and early indicators of workplace volatility can be the best prevention. Experts say the few instances of workplace conflicts at JSC could have been avoided by taking action earlier but we don't always know how to identify or respond to the signs.

"Our low occurrence rate actually makes JSC more vulnerable to workplace violence," says Jackie Reese, director of JSC's Employee Assistance Program. "Because we have few incidents, we are less familiar with how to respond to the ones we do have."

Reese says there are signs that can help employees identify potential problems. Changes in behavior over a prolonged period, such as a change in attendance, mood, personality or even

productivity, can be an indicator of an impending problem.

Additionally, being aware and respectful of trauma in our coworkers' lives can help avoid emotionally triggered outbursts. Illnesses, extreme stress, personal loss and relationship complications such as divorce, can lessen their ability to contain feelings, according to Reese.

"Be mindful of your own behavior," adds Bob Hall of JSC's Human Resources Office. "Be sensitive about the words you use and take care to ensure that what you say and how you say it won't be misconstrued and won't provoke others."

The workplace is far different than it was only a few generations ago, and the way you communicate may be more important than you think. Inappropriate jokes or commentary regarding workplace violence should be avoided.

"Employees have been reported, as they should be, for joking about 'going postal' or similar conversations," said Reese. "The climate does not allow for that anymore. It's too serious an issue."

In fact, JSC has released an updated policy and guidelines on workplace violence and threatening behavior. The new policy will be distributed as JSCA 00-047 and can be reviewed online via the JSC internal Web site Announcements link. The announcement outlines behavior

symptomatic of workplace violence, recommendations and required action for employees. The policy applies to all JSC civil service employees, detailees, contractors and visitors.

Conflicts are categorized into three levels, based on severity.

Level I represents the earliest stages of conflict, represented in veiled threats

or even inappropriate tones. Level II includes threatening gestures, written or verbal threats or property abuse. And Level III characterizes the escalation of conflict including scuffles, assaults or a loss-of-control event creating fear of imminent harm. From the earliest stages, employees should report incidents to their supervisors.

"Talk to your supervisor no matter how insignificant you may feel an incident was," says Reese, who also says one of the most popular misconceptions regarding workplace conflict is that it will solve itself and go away. "If you teach people how to get involved early, you can avoid getting to the later stages of a conflict."

There is no magic indicator or profile when it comes to emotional issues and workplace aggression. Women are just as likely as men, and JSC is just as susceptible as any other large organization. It is up to each of us every day to provide a safe work environment and be proactive about protecting and caring for each other. In some cases,

uncontrollable emotions can be the result of a medical condition, such as thyroid disorders, and bringing it to the attention of professionals may help expedite treatment.

"Intervention is the key," says Dave Davenport of JSC's Security Office. "We don't have to have this type of incident if everyone gets involved early. It's just a matter of everyone helping everyone." ■

If you suspect someone may be having difficulty controlling their emotions, or you are finding yourself more irritable and unable to contain your emotions – get involved and get assistance through your supervisor or call the Employee Assistance Program at x36130.



GILRUTH CENTER NEWS

Sign up policy:

All classes and athletic activities are on a first-come, first-served basis.

Sign up in person at the Gilruth Center and show a yellow Gilruth or weight room badge. Classes tend to fill up two weeks in advance.

Payment must be made in full, by cash or by check, at the time of registration.

No registration will be taken by telephone. For more information, call x33345.

Gilruth badges:

Required for use of the Gilruth Center. Employees, spouses, eligible dependents, NASA retirees and spouses may apply for photo identification badges from 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays. Cost is \$12. Dependents must be between 16 and 23 years old.

Open from 6:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 6:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday, and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. Contact the Gilruth Center at (281) 483-3345.

<http://www4.jsc.nasa.gov/ah/exceaa/Gilruth/Gilruth.htm>

Nutrition intervention program: This is a free seven-week program designed to provide an understanding of the role diet and nutrition play in health. The program includes a series of lectures and private consultations with a dietitian. You will learn how to use dietary vitamins, minerals and herbal nutraceuticals for optimizing health. Classes are held on Wednesdays from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. For details call Tammie Labiche, registered dietitian, at (281) 483-2980.

Defensive driving: One-day course is offered once a month at the Gilruth Center. Pre-registration required. Cost is \$25. Call for next available class.

Stamp club: Meets every second and fourth Monday at 7 p.m. in Rm. 216.

Weight safety: Required course for employees wishing to use the Gilruth weight room. Pre-registration is required. Cost is \$5. Annual weight room use fee is \$105. The cost for additional family members is \$58.

Exercise: Low-impact class meets from 5:15-6:15 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Cost is \$24 for eight weeks.

Step/bench aerobics: Low-impact cardiovascular workout. Classes meet from 5:25-6:25 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Cost is \$40 for eight weeks.

Yoga stretching: Stretching class of low-impact exercises designed for people of all ages and abilities in a Westernized format. Meets Thursdays 5-6 p.m. Cost is \$40 for eight weeks. Call Darrell Matula, instructor, at x38520 for more information.

Ballroom dancing: Classes meet Thursdays from 6:30-7:30 p.m. for beginner, 8:30-9:30 p.m. for intermediate and 7:30-8:30 p.m. for advanced. Cost is \$60 per couple.

Country and western dancing: Beginner class meets 7-8:30 p.m. Mondays. Advanced class (must know basic steps to all dances) meets 8:30-10 p.m. Mondays. Cost is \$20 per couple.

Fitness program: Health-related fitness program includes a medical screening examination and a 12-week individually prescribed exercise program. For more information call Larry Wier at x30301.

Aikido: Martial arts class for men and women meets 5-6 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. No special equipment or knowledge is needed to participate. Aikido teaches balance and control to defend against an opponent without using strength or force. Beginning and advanced classes start each month. Cost is \$35 per month.

It's not too early...



To begin thinking about the Health Run/Walk on Safety and Total Health Day and how your directorate could be the lucky winner of the "George Award," JSC's answer to the Oscar for health event participation.

The good thing is, it doesn't go to the swiftest in the race. Instead, this special award, named in honor of Center Director George Abbey, will be given to the directorate that has the highest percentage turnout for the Gilruth Center Health Run/Walk.

Participants are encouraged to register online at <http://www.srqa.jsc.nasa.gov/sth2000/>. There is no fee to participate. The first 1,500 registrants may

purchase a commemorative T-shirt for only \$3 while supplies last.

The first annual George Award was won by the Safety, Reliability and Quality Assurance Office for having an astonishing 97 percent participation in the 1999 Safety and Total Health Day Health Run/Walk event.

The George Award, a handsome space-motif trophy, will be yours to display for the entire year as a reminder to your employees and visitors alike that taking part in a health event as a team is important to you and something you worked harder to accomplish than anyone else at JSC in the year 2000. ■