

## **Henry Pratt Company Shooting**

On Friday, February 15, 2019, Gary Martin, age 45, armed with a handgun, killed 5 employees and wounded 5 police officers at the Henry Pratt Company in Aurora, Illinois, a subsidiary of Mueller Water Products. The Atlanta-based company manufactures water measurement products. Martin was in the process of being terminated when he shot the 3 employees who were at the meeting and 2 others who were nearby. It is believed Martin knew he was going to be terminated and brought the gun to the meeting. Martin was killed after police found him attempting to hide and he fired on officers. Martin had worked there for 15 years.



### ***Henry Pratt Company***

#### ***Consider the Challenges and Time Needed to Search and Secure a Warehouse Facility***

Martin, exchanged gunfire with police as soon as officers entered the building. They pursued Martin inside until they were eventually able to find him and shot him dead. The **“active shooter”** event at the workplace lasted approximately 90 minutes. The building is in an industrial area and includes a 29,000 square foot warehouse.

One of the victims shot and killed during the meeting was a human resources intern. Friday was his first day at the company. While it’s not known what affect his presence had, introducing a young and new employee for purposes of observing a termination, could very well have had a deleterious effect. As will be noted below, maintaining the dignity of the dismissed employee should be the aim of any termination.

All businesses face the difficult task of terminating employees. Its among the recurring catalysts for work place violence and **“active shooter”** situations.

### **Considerations for Employee Terminations**

1. Have a professional threat assessment performed, especially if there is any concern about the potential for violence.
2. Use a neutral manager or outside security consultant to carry out the termination.
3. If there is a manager or supervisor who has been the subject of threats or who has a strained relationship with the employee, that person should not participate in the termination.
4. Have security nearby and in a position to monitor for any signs of a problem and be able to intervene. In certain cases it may be appropriate to have a security officer present.
5. Do not take a break during the termination interview. There have been instances when an employee asking for a bathroom break or time to compose him or herself has used the opportunity to retrieve a weapon.
6. If possible, wait until the end of the workday to terminate the employee. This will minimize the number of employees on hand should a situation escalate. It's also an effort to help maintain the dignity of the person being terminated. Further, it prevents the terminated employee from returning that day.
7. Eliminate or at least limit the reasons why the employee would have to return to the workplace. For example, collect any and all company identification cards and building access passes, mail the final check and have uncollected belongings delivered to the employee's home via a delivery service.
8. Ensure notice of the termination is provided to all employees, reception area, guard force, etc. People unaware of the termination may inadvertently allow return access to the building believing he/she is still employed.
9. Provide severance benefits. Consider not contesting unemployment benefits, continue to provide health insurance programs for a limited period of time, and offer the option of resigning. While this involves cost, it will help minimizing any ill feelings the employee may have or subsequently develop.

***While no efforts can guaranty a terminated employee won't become violent, employing the above measures can potentially mitigate problems as they may lessen the tension and acrimony between the employee and people at the business.***