

Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center
Bona fide agent for Kentucky Department for Public Health
333 Waller Avenue, Suite 242 • Lexington, KY 40504 • 859-257-5839

REPORT#: 20KY050

REPORT DATE: 6/7/2021

INCIDENT HIGHLIGHTS



DATE:

November 10, 2020



TIME:

9:30 AM



VICTIM:

Age: 56

Sex: Female

Occupation: Kitchen Manager



INDUSTRY/NAICS CODE:

Rooming & boarding houses -
721310



EMPLOYER:

Men's shelter & soup kitchen



SAFETY & TRAINING:

Informal safety training
program



SCENE:

Shelter foyer



LOCATION:

Kentucky

EVENT TYPE:

Homicide



Shelter Kitchen Manager Fatally Stabbed by Resident

SUMMARY

On Tuesday, November 10, 2020, a 56-year-old female kitchen manager was stabbed by a resident utilizing the shelter services. The victim died as a result of the injuries shortly after the incident occurred.

[READ THE FULL REPORT>](#) (p.5)

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Key contributing factors identified in this investigation include:

- Allowing shelter residents access to kitchen
- Lack of shelter personnel
- Lack of security

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Kentucky FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Employers should restrict access to kitchen and other areas where potential weapons may be located.
- Employers should consider implementing a policy which restricts one-on-one contact with shelter residents and requires a minimum of two staff members to be on the premises at all times.
- Employers should consider hiring an on-site security guard.

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Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program

This case report was developed to draw the attention of employers and employees to a serious safety hazard and is based on preliminary data only. This publication does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident, cause of the injury, or fault of employer, employee, or any party involved.

This Case report was developed by the Kentucky Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program. Kentucky FACE is a NIOSH-funded occupational fatality surveillance program with the goal of preventing fatal work injuries by studying the worker, the work environment, and the role of management, engineering, and behavioral changes in preventing future injuries. The FACE program is located in the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC). KIPRC is a bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

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INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, November 10, 2020, at 9:50 AM, a 56-year-old kitchen manager (victim) of a soup kitchen and men's shelter, was preparing lunch for shelter residents. During the course of her duties, she walked outside to take a break. While standing on the sidewalk in front of the shelter, a resident attacked the victim without warning, knocking her to the ground in the entryway to the facility. The resident proceeded to stab the victim multiple times with a knife. The victim succumbed to the injuries sustained in the attack.

EMPLOYERS

The employer is a soup kitchen and shelter for men experiencing homelessness. The shelter was founded in 2000, consists of 5 total employees, and a group of 11 volunteers that serve on the board of directors.

WRITTEN SAFETY PROGRAMS and TRAINING

A company representative stated that their employees receive monthly training. The training is primarily focused on the de-escalation of confrontations with residents and is delivered verbally in a group setting.

WORKER INFORMATION

The victim was a 56-year-old divorced female with one child. She held a high school diploma and had completed some college credit. The victim had been affiliated with the shelter for the last 12 years - seven as a volunteer and the last five as the kitchen manager.

INCIDENT SCENE

The incident occurred at the shelter, which is located inside the city limits of a Kentucky metropolitan area and sits adjacent to the local police department. The facility is used as both a soup kitchen and housing for men experiencing homelessness. The incident occurred in front of the facility, where the victim had been smoking a cigarette on her break.

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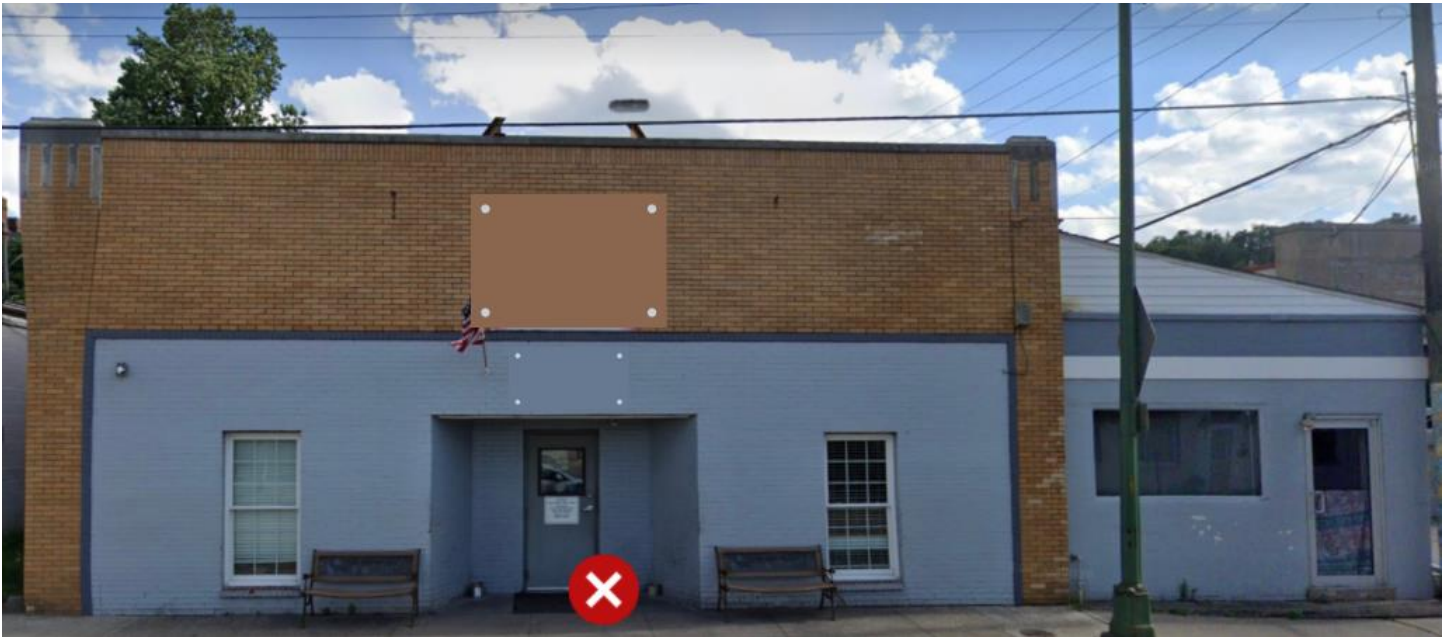


Photo 1. Google Street View image of the location where the incident occurred. The red X indicates the location the victim was standing as the attack began. "Kentucky city street," by Google, Digital Image.

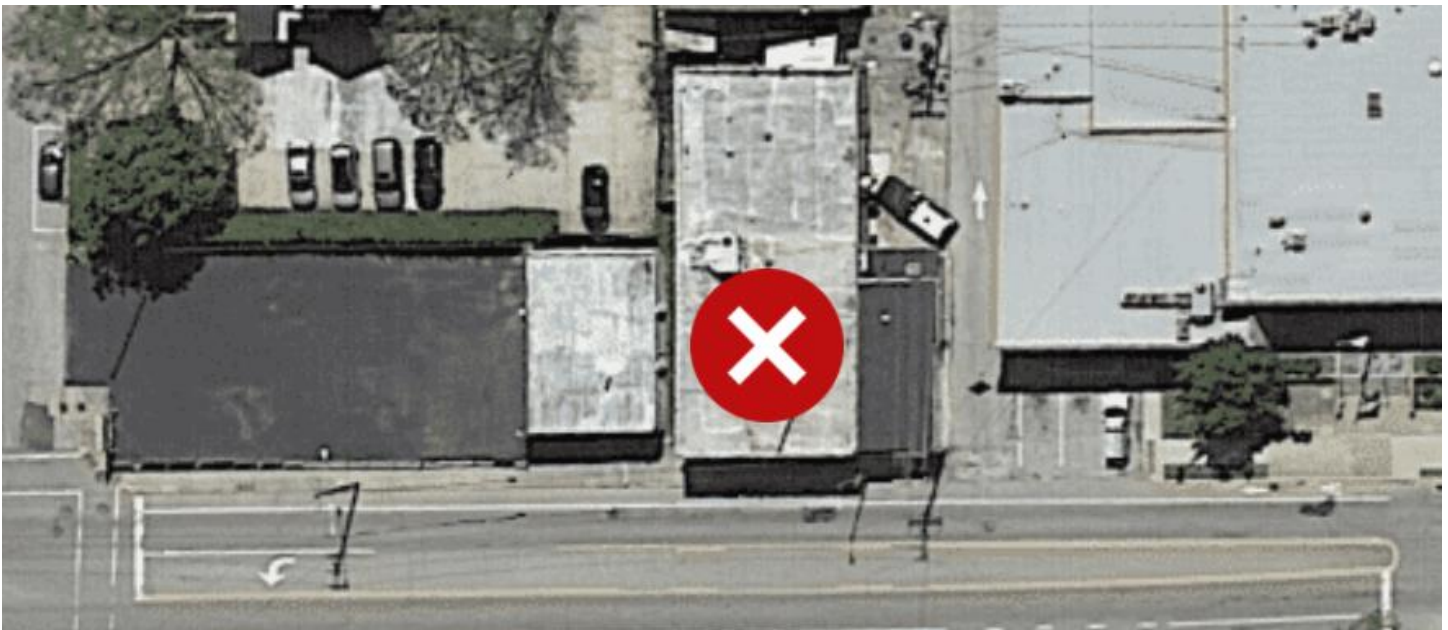


Photo 2. Google overhead image of the location where the incident occurred. The red X indicates the facility involved. "Kentucky city street," by Google, Digital Image.



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WEATHER

The temperature was approximately 64°F at the time of the incident. The humidity was 72% with a south wind at 10 mph and no precipitation. Weather was not determined to be a factor in the incident (Weather underground, 2020).

INVESTIGATION

On November 10, 2020, a female kitchen manager (victim) arrived at work at 8:00 am to begin the daily meal preparation for residents of the shelter, a task that she completed daily for 60-110 people, depending on the time of the month. The morning the incident occurred, two staff members were on-site: the victim and one additional male employee. This was a common arrangement for the shelter, as the workforce is largely comprised of volunteers. In an interview with a company representative, he stated, *"the day began like most others at the shelter, nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, business as usual."* The male shelter employee received a phone call shortly before the incident occurred, prompting him to depart the shelter to obtain a donation that had been provided by a local grocery store. At approximately 9:20 am, the victim exited the facility through the front door to smoke a cigarette during her break. As she exited the facility, a 39-year-old male shelter resident (assailant) was standing outside, engaged in a phone conversation with an unknown individual. Throughout the assailant's conversation, he became agitated for an unknown reason. According to a facility contact, using information provided in the police report, the assailant charged the victim without warning or provocation, knocking her to the ground and through the front door as she turned her back to him while entering the facility. While the victim lay on the floor, partially inside the front door, the assailant proceeded to stab the victim multiple times in the chest and abdomen area with a knife which was believed by police to have been obtained from the shelter's kitchen. Three residents who were inside the facility heard the situation unfolding and witnessed the attack. One of the witnesses briefly attempted to intervene, but was unable to do so. As the assailant concluded the attack, he attempted to remove the victim from the building by dragging her outside. At the same time, one of the witnesses exited the facility through a side door, ran across the street to the police department, and reported the attack. The police responded and were on the scene of the attack within seconds of being informed.

According to a company representative, the police approached the assailant, who was still holding the knife that he had used to stab the victim. The police ordered the assailant to drop the knife, but he failed to comply with the officer's commands. The police officer deployed a taser and was able to successfully detain the assailant. EMS arrived on scene moments after the assailant was placed into police custody; however, the victim had succumbed to her injuries and was pronounced deceased at the scene. According to a shelter staff member, the assailant had been a resident of the shelter for approximately four months. During his time at the shelter, the victim received one disciplinary notice for a violation of shelter rules; however, details pertaining to the rules violation and the disciplinary notice were not provided. A shelter employee stated that the victim and the assailant had "plenty of interaction" throughout the course of her duties as the kitchen manager, which was described as common. No previous incidents or altercations between the two had ever occurred, and the attack was described as unexpected and unprovoked.

CAUSE OF DEATH

According to the death certificate, the cause of death was multiple sharp force injuries of the head, neck, chest, abdomen, and upper extremities. An autopsy found the victim had suffered at least 39 stab or incised wounds.

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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Occupational injuries and fatalities are often the result of one or more contributing factors or key events in a larger sequence of events that ultimately result in the injury or fatality. Kentucky FACE investigators identified the following unrecognized hazards as key contributing factors in this incident:

- Allowing shelter residents access to kitchen
- Lack of shelter personnel
- Lack of security

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: Employers should restrict access to kitchen and other areas where potential weapons may be located.

Discussion: According to a shelter contact, police believe the assailant obtained the knife used in the attack from the kitchen located inside the shelter. A contact at the shelter elaborated on the role residents play while residing at the shelter, stating that residents who exhibit good behavior over an extended period of time can be tasked with jobs to perform, which can include vacuuming, sweeping floors, and helping prepare meals in the kitchen. The kitchen area, according to the site contact, was accessible to residents at the time the incident occurred. Although the assailant did not assist with the preparation of lunch on the day of the attack, there was no restrictions on who was permitted to enter the kitchen. As a best practice, employers should restrict access to the kitchen area where knives are stored to employees and only those residents tasked with meal preparations. As an additional precaution, employers in similar industries should conduct regular inventory to account for the presence of objects which could be utilized to inflict bodily harm.

Recommendation #2: Employers should consider implementing a policy which restricts one-on-one contact with shelter residents and require a minimum of two staff members to be on the premises at all times.

Discussion: The attack on the victim occurred while she was isolated with the assailant. The victim's male coworker had left the premises in order to obtain a donation, leaving the victim by herself when the attack initially began outside the front door of the shelter. Being alone with the assailant may have increased the probability or likelihood of the attack occurring. A one-on-one situation significantly increases the likelihood that a perpetrator who is contemplating an attack will act on those thoughts. It is not practical for shelter employees and volunteers to avoid residents, nor would it be helpful to the organization, the shelter residents, or the shelter's goals of providing aid to those in need. However, the risk of attacks on employees can be managed by employers implementing a policy which restricts one-on-one contact with the residents and requiring two staff members to be on the premises at all times. Having an additional staff member present may help reduce the likelihood of an attack. If an attack does still occur, the additional worker may be able to intervene in order to reduce the severity and duration of the attack, as well as provide first aid, if necessary.

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Recommendation #3: Employers should consider hiring an on-site security guard.

Discussion: On average, more than six homicides occur at the workplace every year in Kentucky alone. Nationally, that number rises to an average of 449 workplace homicides annually. Although homicides at work make up a small percentage of total work-related fatalities, it is imperative that employers take steps to minimize the risk. Depending on the nature of the business, some employers may have a greater exposure than others. One disadvantage the involved employer has is the lack of information about individuals requesting the shelter services. A shelter representative stated that a screening process does occur, prior to allowing access to the facility; however, many individuals do not possess a state issued identification card. Lacking any proper identification leaves the shelter in such a position in which it must rely solely on a Q&A session to determine eligibility until the shelter can later confirm details. Lacking information to make an informed decision increases the shelter's exposure to allowing a potentially violent individual into the shelter. The presence of a uniformed security guard can be an extremely effective method for deterring criminal actions. Properly training security guards serves as both a cognitive and physical roadblock for potential acts of violence, thus potentially preventing a violent act before it occurs. In the event a perpetrator acts, a trained security guard can intervene and control the situation quickly, lessening the overall severity of the event. When possible, employers should consider hiring an on-site security guard for added protection against criminal activity.

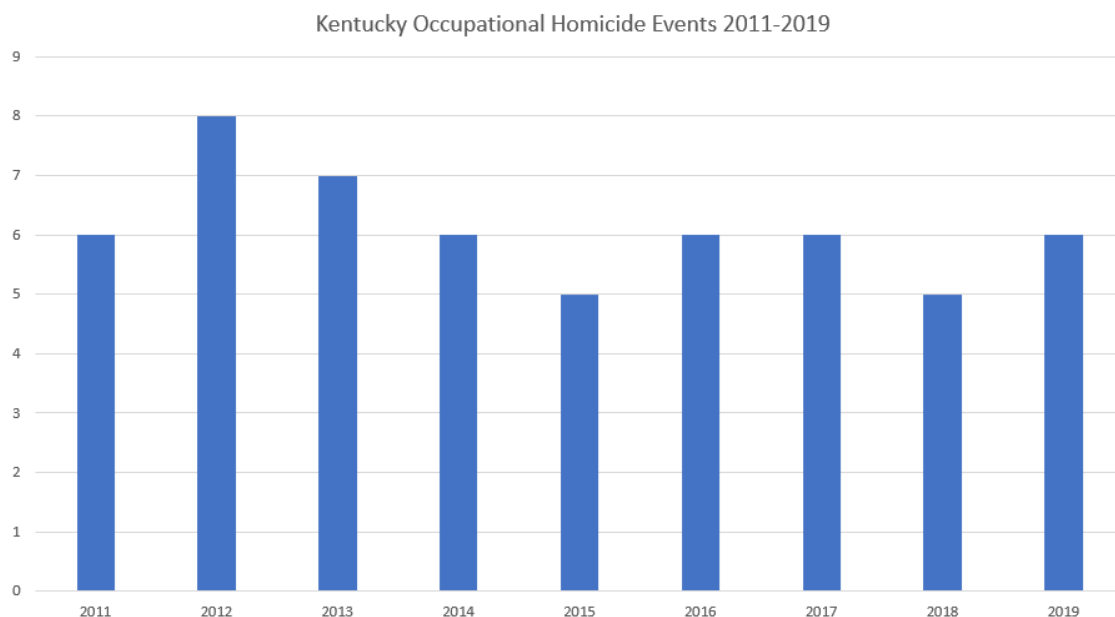


Chart 1. Bar graph depicting the annual number of occupational related homicides in Kentucky from 2011-2019. Data courtesy of the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Graph created by KY FACE.

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National Occupational Homicide Events 2011-2019

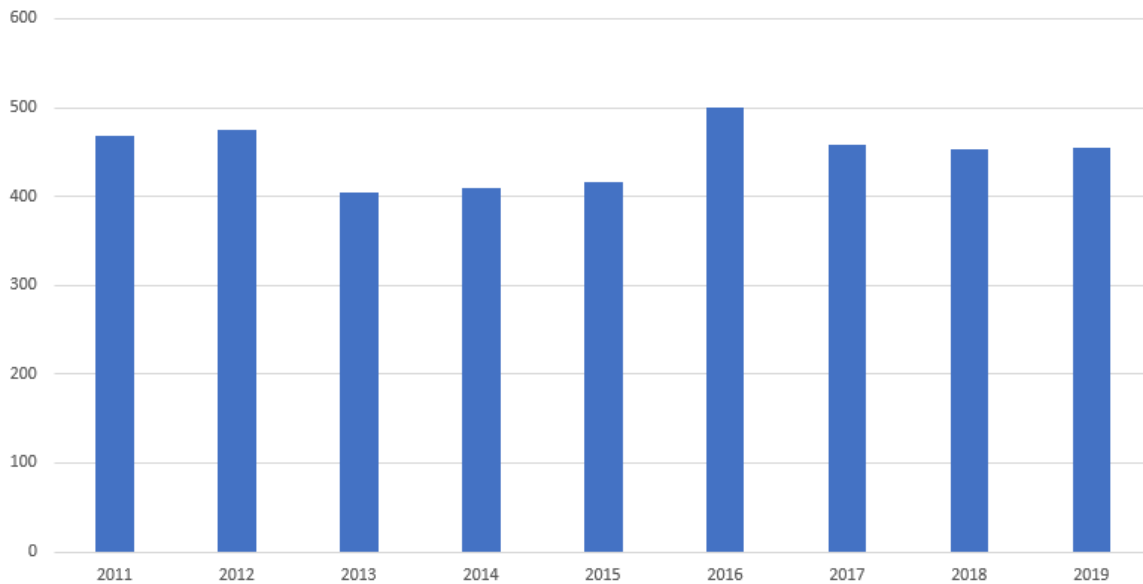


Chart 2. Bar graph depicting the annual number of occupational related homicides in the United States from 2011-2019. Data courtesy of the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Graph created by KY FACE.

PROGRAM FUNDING

The Kentucky Fatality Assessment & Control Evaluation Program (FACE) is funded by grant 5U600H008483-16 from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

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INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

This investigation was conducted by Beau Mosley, Fatality Investigator, Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation, Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, University of Kentucky, College of Public Health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Kentucky FACE Program would like to thank the involved company and the county coroner for their assistance in the completion of this report.

SURVEY

[Please click here](#) to take a brief, anonymous survey concerning this report. We appreciate any feedback you may have.