

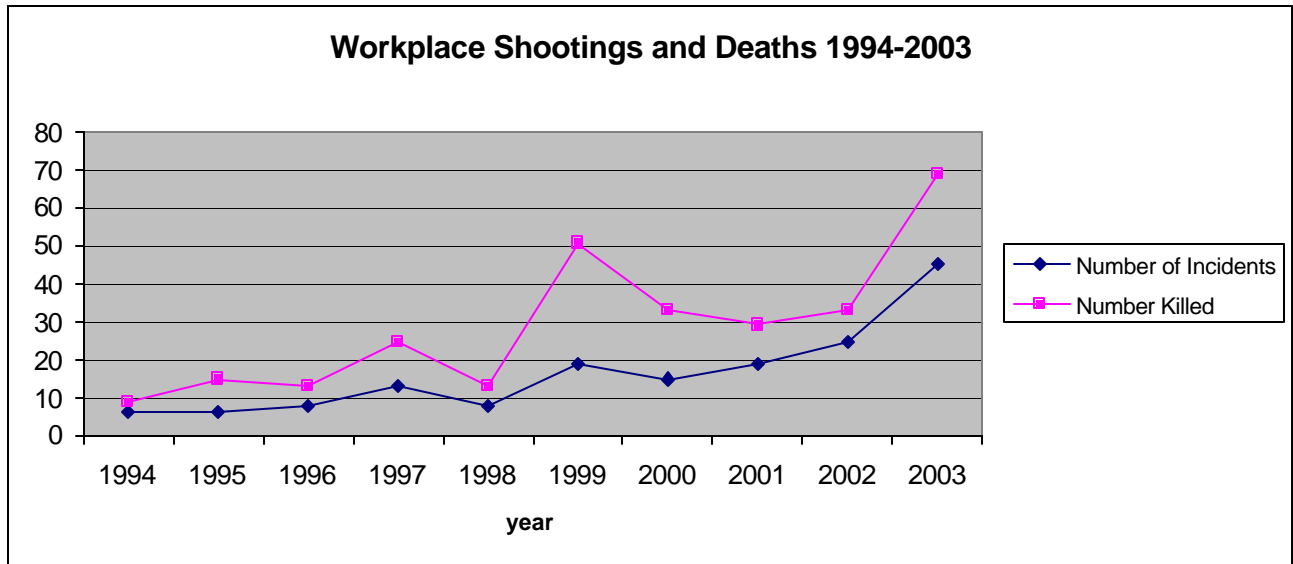
Selected Key Findings:

- *In the last decade (1994-2003), there were 164 workplace shootings in America, with a total of 290 people killed and 161 wounded*
- *From 2002 to 2003, the number of workplace shootings increased from 25 to 45 and the number of victims killed in workplace shootings increased from 33 to 69*
- *51.8% of those who committed workplace shootings experienced a negative change in employment status, including 23.8% who were fired or laid off, and 28.0% who were demoted, suspended, or involved with some type of financial dispute with management*
- *At least 13.4% of the cases reviewed indicated the shooter had a publicly known history of mental health concerns*
- *9.1% of the shooters displayed warning signs prior to the shootings – warning signs that were usually ignored by those who noticed them*
- *56.9% of offenders were 40 or older, and 80.3% were 30 or older*
- *91.6% of workplace shooters were male*
- *At least 13.4% of the incidents reviewed involved the shooting of a current or former intimate partner*
- *31.7% of workplace shooting incidents occurred in a white collar job setting, accounting for 31.4% of all workplace shooting deaths*
- *78.5% of the guns used in workplace shootings were handguns, and 81.2% of those handguns were semiautomatics*
- *32.1% of all workplace shooters took their own life at the end of their rampage*
- *35.8% of male shooters committed suicide after killing their coworkers, compared to 7.1% of female shooters*
- *Workplace shooters who committed suicide killed an average of 2.45 people and injured an average of 1.51, compared to 1.47 killed and 0.71 injured by workplace shooters who did not commit suicide*
- *California and Florida were the most dangerous states when it comes to workplace shootings*

Introduction

Among the 30,000 Americans who fall prey to gun violence each year, one group has increasingly been targeted in recent years – workers. Workplace shootings are on the rise nationwide, a trend that should prove alarming to large and small employers alike. In fact, July 2003 may be recorded as the most lethal month yet, when 20 people were killed and another 19 wounded at the hands of coworkers. From 1998 to 2003, the number of workplace shooting incidents as well as the number of people killed per incident increased significantly. In fact, workplace shootings virtually doubled from 2002 to 2003 alone, increasing from 25 to 45 incidents, with a rise in the number of people killed in these shootings from 33 to 69. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Workplace Shootings from 1994-2003



The Department of Justice estimates that employees are murdering their supervisors at a rate of 3 to 4 per month – twice as many as in 1985 – and workplace violence has been listed as an official epidemic in the United States since 1993. In the 1990s, homicides in the workplace overtook other causes of injury-related death in the workplace.¹

What circumstances have driven American workers to become so violent? It can be argued that a combination of work-related stress, decreasing wages, and a fluctuating labor market have contributed to many incidents of workplace violence. One thing is certain: the overabundance of guns in America and the easy access we have to them make workplace incidents far worse and more violent. Today, more than 75 percent of all workplace homicides are committed with firearms, and the easy access to guns in America certainly contributes to this.²

¹ “Homicide in the Workplace,” *Violence in the Workplace*, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), July 1996, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/violcont.html>.

² *Homicide in the Workplace*, page 11

Methodology

This report has been created in an effort to understand the trends associated with workplace shootings, detailing specific incidents ranging from the beginning of 1994 through the end of 2003, and revealing how the presence of firearms in our society has facilitated such an epidemic. Handgun-Free America set out to study workplace violence by assembling a detailed database of as many such incidents as could be discovered by searching news articles in all 50 states beginning in 1994. Key words, such as “workplace shooting” and “disgruntled employee” were entered into LexisNexis and Google News, which returned relevant articles. Handgun-Free America examined the articles to find key information, which was then entered into a centralized database.

164 cases have been identified that met the criteria. These criteria include:

1. That a gun must have been fired, resulting in the injury and/or death of one or more current employee(s);
2. That an employee or former employee must have committed the shooting, or it must have been committed by another individual who was invited to the workplace, such as a client or a relative/acquaintance of an employee; and,
3. That the shooting must not have been the result of robbery.

In addition, all school-related shootings and shootings involving law enforcement officers being shot or killed in the line of duty have been excluded from this study.

In many cases, it was quite difficult to compile complete, precise information; some sources did not mention the type of weapon used, the age of the offender, or past criminal background information. Although research was extensive and all efforts were made to include every incident matching our criteria, it is unlikely that this database includes every single workplace shooting incident in the last 10 years.

Typical Offenders

The term “going postal” was coined in the late 1980s and early 1990s after a series of postal service employees murdered their coworkers. Now, we use the term “disgruntled employee” to describe a worker who engages in violent acts towards other employees or supervisors, usually due to some work-related incident. Unfortunately, workplace violence can occur in any setting, at any moment in time. Whether in a factory or an office building, no place of business is immune from workplace shootings. Yet while the location and outcome may vary dramatically, people who shoot and kill their coworkers share a number of similar characteristics.

The most common factor uncovered in those who resort to shooting their coworkers and supervisors is employment status. Offenders are likely to be employees who have recently experienced a negative change in employment status, including those who have been fired, whose contracts have not been renewed, or who have been suspended because of a dispute with management. According to the data collected, 51.8% of those who instigated workplace shootings were recently fired, suspended, or experienced some other actual or perceived negative change in employment status. (This includes 23.8% who were fired or laid off, and 28.0% who were demoted, suspended, or involved with some type of financial dispute with supervisors.)

Some employees were fired after they were found stealing from the company. Others became enraged after being assigned a shift or work schedule they were unhappy with. A case in 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia, involved an investment broker who lost \$400,000 in one day and then shot 12 other brokers to death and wounded 13 others, in addition to killing his wife and two children. Among the other employment-related reasons for turning violent on coworkers and/or supervisors were being turned down for a promotion or being told to take the rest of the day off.

At least 13.4% of the cases reviewed indicated the shooter had a publicly known history of mental health concerns. In addition, 9.1% of the shooters displayed warning signs prior to the shootings – warning signs that were usually ignored by those who noticed them. This behavior ranges from previous incidents of violence at the workplace to a shooter directly warning someone that something is going to happen.

Perhaps the starkest example of ignored warning signs was in the May 17, 1995 incident at a Union Butterfield plant in Asheville, North Carolina, where James Davis returned after being fired and killed three supervisors, wounding a fourth. Prior to being fired from the company, he had repeatedly picked fights at the warehouse where he worked, and had actually told colleagues

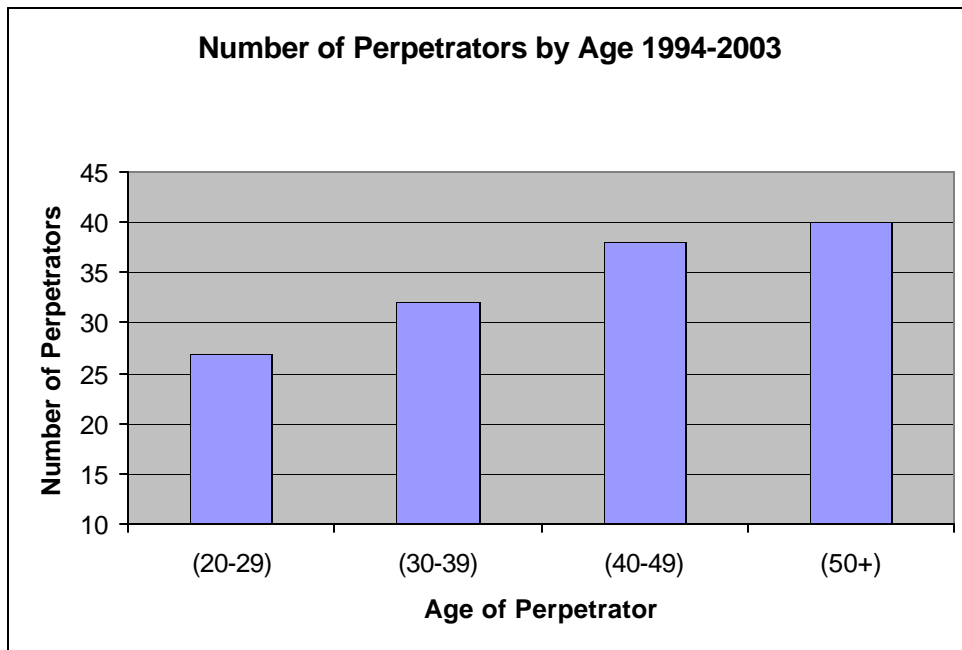
“Going Postal”

On August 20, 1986, in Edmond, Oklahoma, gunfire shook through the local post office. Patrick Henry Sherrill, also known as, “Crazy Pat,” arrived at work armed with two handguns. He was angry and emotionally upset, because he believed he would soon be fired. His initial targets were his two supervisors, who he shot and killed. However, his rampage did not end there. He continued through the crowded halls shooting anything in sight. After fifty rounds of ammunition were fired, fourteen co-workers were dead and another seven injured. In the end, Sherrill turned the barrel of the gun in his direction, taking his own life. From there, a chain of workplace violence within the US postal service began, giving meaning to the widely used term “going postal.”

that if he were ever fired he would return to kill his bosses. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened.

56.9% of offenders were 40 or older, and 80.3% were 30 or older. The youngest perpetrators were 20-year-olds, and the oldest was 73-years-old.

Figure 2: Age and Number of Perpetrators



There is a large difference between women and men when it comes to workplace shootings. The overwhelming majority of workplace shooters – 91.6% – are male. Men are also more likely than women to commit suicide after their shootings. While 35.8% of men who shot at coworkers and/or supervisors committed suicide after their killings, only 1 woman – or 7.1% of the 14 female shooters – ended their rampages by taking their own lives.

31.7% of workplace shootings happen in white-collar job settings

While the motive for workplace shootings is not always discovered, in some cases, a romance gone sour has ended in death. At least 8 of the incidents reviewed involved either a love triangle within the office or a coworker refusing the offender’s romantic advances. Domestic violence spilling over from the home into the workplace is another source of many workplace shootings. At least 13.4% of the incidents reviewed involved some type of domestic violence as the motive. Usually it is men killing their current or former wives or girlfriends, but it also includes, for example, shooters who killed a person thought to be having an affair with their significant other.

Workplace shootings occur in both blue-collar and white-collar jobs. In fact, from 1994 to 2003, 31.7% of workplace shootings happened in a white-collar job setting, accounting for 31.4% of all workplace shooting deaths. They also occur in both large and small companies, from companies that employ tens of thousands to those with just 2 or 3.

Presence of Guns

Due to their small size and high firepower, semiautomatic handguns were used in the vast majority of all workplace shootings.

Of all firearms identified in the data, 78.5% were handguns, and 81.2% of those were semiautomatic. 5.7% of the guns used were rifles; 7.6% were assault weapons; and, 8.2% were shotguns. (18.6% of the guns used in workplace shootings could not be identified by the data.)

Semiautomatic handguns, especially 9mm, .45-caliber and .380-caliber pistols, are often used. There were also a number of cases where a semiautomatic assault rifle was used, specifically an AK-47. When assault weapons are used, there are an exceptionally high number of fatalities. For example, Joseph Ferguson used a semiautomatic AK-47 to kill 6 coworkers and wound 2 others at Burns Security in Sacramento, California on September 8, 2001. Michael McDermott also carried a semiautomatic AK-47 when he shot 7 of his coworkers to death in Wakefield, Massachusetts the day after Christmas in 2000. In 2003, of the 45 incidents recorded, a semiautomatic AK-47 was used in 3 shootings.

78.5 % of guns used in workplace shootings are handguns, and 81.2% of those are semiautomatics

Oftentimes, the perpetrators are heavily armed with numerous firearms. Some of them bring more than one weapon, as did William Dan Baker, who brought a golf bag with 19 weapons when he went on a 2001 rampage in Illinois that left 4 coworkers dead and 4 others wounded. The killers also bring an ample amount of ammunition, like Di-Kieu Duy who brought a “grocery sack full of bullets” to an office building in Salt Lake City, Utah.³ Clearly, the weapon of choice for workplace murderers is a firearm – and usually ones with a significant amount of firepower.

For example, on July 23, 2001, in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, Keith James Adams got into an argument with the foreman at a construction worksite. Adams was angered after his foreman asked him to pick up nails and other debris from the driveway. After refusing, “he walked to his car, sat there for a few minutes and then came out with an AK-47 and started shooting,” according to the account of police Lt. Robert Artola, as reported in the *St. Petersburg Times*.⁴ Adams shot foreman William White to death, and also fired at 2 other co-workers.

Over the last few decades, the gun industry has flooded the market with weapons that are more powerful, easier to conceal, more portable and cheaper. The results of this new marketing strategy have been catastrophic for society as a whole, and especially for America’s workers. With easier access to these highly lethal, more discreet weapons, disgruntled employees are now more than ever able to gun down a higher number of their associates with ease. As *The New York Times* noted in a report released in 2000, “In the late 1980s, the production of semiautomatic pistols in the United States overtook the production of revolvers, and with their

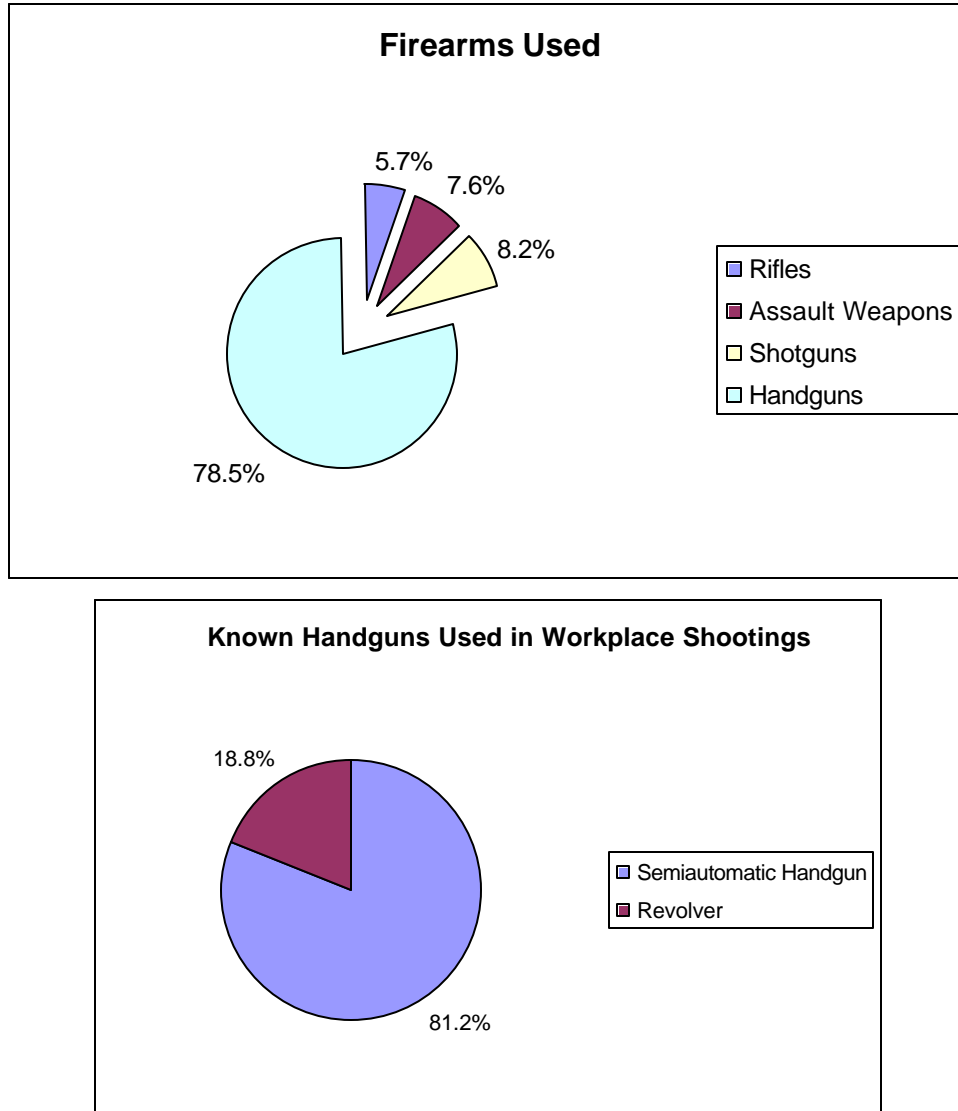
³ *The Holland Sentinel*, “Police chief calls for tougher laws in wake of Utah shooting,” April 17, 1999.

⁴ *St. Petersburg Times*, “Anger at construction site results in 1 killed 1 hurt,” July 24, 2001.

larger ammunition magazines and faster reloading, semiautomatics have added to the potential for mayhem.”⁵

Since guns offer quick, definitive results, they are often the tool of choice for workplace killers. If a firearm is easily accessible in the vicinity, a small argument is more likely to escalate into a “rampage killing.”

Figure 3: Types of Guns Used in Workplace Shootings



⁵ Ford Fessenden, *The New York Times*, “Rampage Killers – First of four articles: A Statistical Portrait.” April 9, 2000.

Murder Suicide

Easy access to guns makes workplace violence more likely to result in death. Dr. Jian Chen, who killed his mentor and boss at the University of Washington Medical Center, was known by his coworkers to have been distraught over his recently expired contract that was not being renewed. Coworkers also knew that he had been using his department's computer to research buying a gun. Dr. Chen had never made any direct threats, however coworkers still feared he may commit suicide. They never anticipated a murder-suicide.

Of the 164 workplace shootings where such information is available, 55 resulted with the suicide of the perpetrator - almost always at the same place as the killing. Occasionally, it occurred while trying to escape police or at the home of the perpetrator. For instance, the oldest killer, 73-year-old Eugene Guevara, waited 2 days to kill himself after shooting his victim 3 times in a Los Angeles hospital.⁶

According to the information collected, more than 32.1% of workplace shooters took their own life. Studies have found a correlation between the number of victims and the likelihood of suicide: the more victims, the greater the likelihood the perpetrator will take his or her own life.⁷ Workplace shooters who took their own life killed an average of 2.45 people and wounded 1.51, whereas those who did not take their own life killed an average of 1.47 people and wounded 0.71.

In 2003, this phenomenon held true. The two most deadly workplace shootings that resulted in 6 deaths each were at the Lockheed Martin Factory in Mississippi and Windy Corporation Core Supply in Illinois. Both perpetrators killed themselves following their rampages, bringing the total number of deaths to 7 for each.

July 2003: Most Murderous Month

In July 2003, America witnessed 8 workplace shootings that left 20 workers dead, and 19 wounded by gunshots. The first tragic incident occurred at Modine Manufacturing Corporation in Missouri on July 2. Jonathan Russell, a 25-year-old worker who had recently been put on probation, was so angry at his supervisors that he felt compelled to bring a .40-caliber handgun with him to work, killing 3 people and wounding 5 others before

Century 21

On July 23, 2003, Ron Thomas shot and killed 2 co-workers and wounded a 3rd at his job at Century 21 in Temple, Texas. His actions that day prior to the shooting were described as normal. Only 45 minutes earlier, he finished showing a home to a client. He returned to his office, cleaned his desk, and removed his plaques from the wall. After doing so, he pulled out his gun, walked out of his office, shot one woman, proceeded down the hallway to another office, and shot 2 more coworkers. Then, he left the office and drove away. Remaining calm, he drove down the interstate, where a truck driver recognized him from police reports given over the radio. As police gave chase, he shot himself, causing his car to crash into a cornfield. The end results, 2 mothers dead, 1 injured, and 1 father, who no one would have expected to carry out such events, took his own life.

⁶ *The North County Times*, Associate Press, "Man suspected of shooting doctor kills himself in front of LA restaurant," September 21, 2003.

⁷ *The Tampa Tribune*, Sue Corbett and Susana Barciela, "Avenging workers share many traits," February 10, 1996.

shooting and killing himself. Mr. Russell had purchased the handgun only one-month prior to the incident. The gun, from Bob's Gun and Knives in Jefferson City, was legal, and was registered with the Callaway County Sheriff's Department 3 days after he bought it.⁸

Six days after the Modine shooting, Americans witnessed the most tragic workplace shooting in two and half years. In this case, a Meridian, Mississippi Lockheed Martin plant provided the setting for Doug Williams' uproar that left 6 people dead and 8 wounded. Like Mr. Russell, Mr. Williams also took his own life. The very next day, Rodney James Monke, a Verizon Wireless employee, took his boss's life and then his own in San Angelo, Texas. All 3 men decided to ambush their respective offices, taking innocent lives along with their own.

Jack Levin, a professor of criminology at Northeastern University in Boston, has noted that, "The avenging worker has decided life is not worth living, but before he goes he is going to eliminate everyone responsible for his problems. Whether it's the whole beach patrol or the whole post office or the entire Long Island Rail Road."⁹

According to a report by the Violence Policy Center, "The catalytic component in murder-suicide is the use of a firearm. Every major murder-suicide study ever conducted has shown that a firearm—with its unmatched combination of lethality and availability—is the weapon most often used to murder the victims, with offenders then turning the gun on themselves. The presence of a gun allows the offender to quickly and easily kill a greater number of victims. If there had not been easy access to a firearm, these deaths may simply have been injuries, or not have occurred at all."¹⁰ A small argument, a pink slip, or a dispute over vacation time starts the vicious cycle. When a gun is available, the cycle quickly ends in injury or death.

⁸ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "Police see job stress as possible motive in factory killings; worker who killed 3 was on probation; supervisor was among those slain," July 3, 2003, page A1.

⁹ *The Tampa Tribune*, Sue Corbett and Susana Barciela, "Avenging workers share many traits," February 10, 1996.

¹⁰ *American Roulette: The Untold Story of Murder-Suicide in the US*, The Violence Policy Center, April 2002. www.vpc.org

In the States

California and Florida are the most violent states for workers in America. More American workers were killed by their co-workers in California than in any other state. Between the years of 1994 and 2003, 21 workplace shooting incidents took place in California, leaving 50 people dead and 25 others wounded. (The percentage of workplace shootings in California is similar to the overall American population in California.)

Florida had a total of 20 workplace shootings and 38 deaths during the same period. Only days after Christmas, on December 30, 1999, an employee at the Radisson Bay Harbor Hotel in Tampa went on a deadly shooting rampage. Silvio Izquierdo-Levy killed 5 people and left 3 wounded with a .38 caliber revolver and a second semiautomatic pistol. In addition to those killed, 16 others have been wounded in the last decade in Florida during workplace shootings.

Pennsylvania had the next highest tally of workplace shootings, with 11, and a total of 22 workers killed and 7 others wounded. Texas, the next highest at 10 workplace shootings in the last decade, was host to 2 workplace shootings in the deadly month of July 2003. Overall, 32 people have died in Texas at the hands of a coworker with a gun in the last 10 years, in addition to 5 others wounded.

101 California Street

While it does not fall within the time period examined in this report, one of the most horrific workplace shooting incidents in California history took place on July 1, 1993, when Gian Luigi Ferri stormed through a San Francisco high rise and killed 9 people, including himself, in addition to wounding 6 others. He used two semiautomatic TEC-9 assault pistols and a handgun, as well as hundreds of rounds of ammunition. Ten years later, families of the victims are still learning to cope with their loss.

Figure 4: Leading States in Workplace Shootings, 1994-2003

State	Incidents	Killed	Wounded
California	21	50	25
Florida	20	38	16
Pennsylvania	11	22	7
Texas	10	32	5
Ohio	10	13	10

Conclusion

Overall, the data collected demonstrates a steady rise in the frequency of workplace shootings in the past six years (1998-2003). With the alarming increase in fatal or near fatal shootings in the workplace throughout the country, Americans are forced to question how the availability of handguns factors into the equation, and workers and workplaces alike need to have an increased awareness about the potential for workplace shootings. Access to firearms – and semiautomatic handguns in particular – make workplace violence incidents more lethal.

This report offers only a small glimpse into the horrors of workplace shootings. The residual effects and post-traumatic impacts that workplace shootings have on the survivors were not considered or analyzed in this report.

The intention of the report is to unveil the dangers posed by incidents of workplace violence, and to demonstrate the increased lethality of these incidents when guns are accessible. All workplace environments are vulnerable to violence and shootings. No workplace is immune from tragic workplace shootings. If we are going to prevent workplace shootings in the future, it is essential to address the easy access to firearms – and especially semiautomatic handguns – in America.

Breakdown of 2003 Workplace Shootings

Date	Place	State	Killed	Wounded	Employment Office
2/21/03	Queens, NY	NY	0	1	Jamaica Service Program for Older Adults
2/25/03	Huntsville, AL	AL	4	1	Labor Ready Inc
5/9/03	Cleveland, OH	OH	1	1	Case Western Reserve University
6/2/03	Atlanta, GA	GA	1	0	In Touch Wireless
6/23/03	Pittsburgh, PA	PA	1	0	United States Postal Carrier
7/2/03	Holts Summit, MO	MO	3	5	Modine Manufacturing Co.
7/8/03	Meridian, MS	MS	7	8	Lockheed Martin Factory
7/9/03	San Angelo, TX	TX	2	0	Verizon Wireless
7/17/03	Charleston, WV	WV	0	1	Kanawha County School Board
7/23/03	San Antonio, TX	TX	3	1	Century 21 Real Estate Office
7/23/03	New York, NY	NY	1	1	NY Council Chambers
7/25/03	Huntsville, AL	AL	1	1	Marriott Hotel
7/28/03	Boynton Beach, FL	FL	3	2	Golf Leaf Nursery
8/8/03	Wilmington, DE	DE	2	1	MBNA America
8/19/03	Andover, OH	OH	2	2	Andover Industries
8/27/03	Chicago, IL	IL	7	0	Windy City Core Supply
8/29/03	Nashville, TN	TN	2	0	Electric Picture Company
9/1/03	Texarkana, TX	TX	3	0	Outback Steakhouse Office
9/10/03	Gulfport, MS	MS	1	0	Newman Lumber Company
9/13/03	Redwood City, NJ	NJ	1	0	Yellow Cab Car
9/15/03	Louisville, KY	KY	0	1	Kidwell's Auto Beautification
9/19/03	Los Angeles, CA	CA	0	1	Kaiser Permanente Medical Center
9/29/03	Minneapolis, MN	MN	0	2	Hennepin County Government Center
10/4/03	Clarksdale, MS	MS	2	1	V's Grocery
10/5/03	Atlanta, GA	GA	3	0	Turner Monumental AME Church
10/7/03	Alcoa, TN	TN	1	0	Slide Lock and Tools
10/8/03	St. Paul, MN	MN	1	0	J&J Distributing
10/28/03	Memphis, TN	TN	1	0	Aiki Kai Martial Arts School
10/28/03	Boca Raton, FL	FL	1	0	Corner Deli
10/31/03	Forsyth, GA	GA	1	0	Paramont Grading
10/31/03	Shreveport, LA	LA	0	1	L & M Grocery
11/4/03	Fort Pierce, FL	FL	1	0	End Time Tabernacle Church
11/6/03	West Chester, OH	OH	2	3	Watkins Motor Lines West Chester Office
11/6/03	Spartansburg, SC	SC	4	0	Superbike Motorsports
11/7/03	Cincinnati, OH	OH	0	1	C & D Drive-Thru
11/7/03	Barberton, OH	OH	0	2	Sydmor's Jewelry Co.
11/10/03	Riviera Beach, FL	FL	1	2	Keller Trust
11/13/03	Houston, TX	TX	0	2	Westwood Technology Center
11/19/03	Baton Rouge, LA	LA	0	1	Microtel Inn and Suites
11/26/03	Miami, FL	FL	1	1	El Peruanito Cafeteria
11/26/03	Cranston, RI	RI	0	1	Eastland Food Products
12/9/03	Visalia, CA	CA	2	0	Print Xcel
12/12/03	Bensalem, PA	PA	1	0	Street Road Firestone Tire
12/15/03	Worcester, MA	MA	0	2	Lowe's Home Improvement
12/29/03	North Philadelphia, PA	PA	2	0	Liberty Management Service Contract Department of Corrections
	TOTAL		69	46	

Mission Statement

Handgun-Free America, founded in 2002 as a non-profit, grassroots organization, is dedicated to eradicating the epidemic of handgun violence in America by reframing the debate on handguns. Our objective is to focus American citizens' attention on the necessity for a complete ban on private handgun ownership. While we applaud the gun control community, its focus on gun safety and restrictions to gun ownership have had limited impact. Tens of thousands of Americans are still dying every year as a result of handgun accessibility. Clearly, gun safety and restriction measures are not enough.

Deaths by handgun are at epidemic proportions in the United States, and this epidemic is uniquely American. We stand alone in the industrialized world in permitting such widespread access to handguns. Handgun-Free America is taking a stand for banning private handgun ownership in America. To that end, our mission is nothing less than saving hundreds of thousands of American lives that would be needlessly lost in the future through handgun violence.

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