



# **National Insider Threat Special Interest Group (NITSIG)**

## **COVID VACCINE MANDATE - INSIDER THREAT IMPLICATIONS**

### **INSIDER THREAT MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR DISGRUNTLED EMPLOYEES**

Some employees must decide between receiving the vaccine against their wishes or facing the possibility of losing their job.

Ideal employees suddenly are at risk of becoming disgruntled employees. This is not an assumption. It is based on real world conversations the NITSIG and our members have had with employees who do not want to be forced to take the vaccine and are concerned with losing their job. (Loss of paychecks, health insurance benefits, etc.). While most organizations or businesses have a number of disgruntled employees, the vaccine mandate will likely add to the number.

The below guidance are considerations and best practices for dealing with potentially disgruntled employees.

#### **Types Of Employees Who Are / Maybe Disgruntled Over Vaccine Mandate**

- Employees with existing medical problems
- Employees with religious beliefs
- Employees close to retirement being pushed out of company
- Young workforce (considering pregnancy / are pregnant)

#### **Possible Impacts From Disgruntled Employees**

- Staffing shortage / skill loss due to employee resignations or terminations
- Actions disgruntled employees could take against the organization:
- Sabotage of facility, information, reputation or business processes
- Data, computer & network sabotage (Procedures For IT - network security administrators that might be terminated should be handled with special procedures)
- Theft of the organization's physical assets
- Theft, disclosure or sale of classified information to foreign government (Espionage)
- Theft of trade secrets, intellectual property, research or other sensitive/confidential information
- Theft of personal identifiable information (PII) or identity theft
- Financial loss resulting from embezzlement or theft
- Collusion among employees to take malicious actions against the organization
- Financial and reputational damage resulting from disgruntled employees speaking to news media or posting to social media
- Workplace violence
- Employees placed on administrative leave for refusing to get vaccinated

### **Considerations To Mitigate Insider Risks**

- Disable facility access
- Disable computer accounts & e-mail or web mail
- Disable remote access to internal network
- Remote disable of workstation
- Remote disable of mobile devices

### **Other Areas Of Concern That May Put Disgruntled Employees Over The Edge**

- Personal Predispositions
- Personal / Social Skills (Interactions With Others, Maladaptive Personality Characteristics)
- Mental Health / Medical / Psychiatric Conditions, Alcohol - Drug Use / Addiction (May Affect Judgment, Decision Making)

### **Internal Workforce Stressors**

- Promised promotion / not promoted
- Recent bad performance review
- Employee is on a performance improvement program
- Problems with supervisor
- Failure to offer employee severance package if terminated for refusing to get vaccinated

### **External Stressors**

- Personal problems (relationship, marriage, divorce, family death, etc.)
- Financial problems (living paycheck to paycheck, decrease in income, credit card debt / overspending, housing / health / medical / education expenses)
- Minor criminal problems / legal expenses

### **Human Resources Involvement**

- Notifications to insider threat program for employees that are: Under current possible pressures / on edge of being disgruntled (employment problems: bad performance reviews, etc., financial problem, marital / relationship problems, etc.)
- Disgruntled employees who may be / or are because of vaccine mandate
- Mental health checks / someone to talk to
- Notification of resignations, terminations to: insider threat program, finance department, facility security, IT network security, etc.

### **Facility Security Involvement**

- Employee works schedule (after hours, weekends without authorization)

### **IT / Network Security Involvement**

- Focused user activity monitoring for disgruntled employees
- Covid e-mail dirty word list
- Signs of employee burn-out
- Employee printing activities / large print jobs (what times, why?)
- Employee unauthorized use of USB storage devices, DVD/CD drives
- Employee attempts to access / open sensitive and restricted documents on network shares
- Employee storage of a significant number of work-related files on user's local hard drive that are copied from networked resources
- Employee use of web services for unauthorized transfer of documents (instant messaging-chat, large file transfer services, tor, etc.)
- Employee unauthorized uploads to cloud storage

### **Resignation / Termination / Post-Employment**

- Retrieve all organizational / company owned devices: computer, laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.
- Employee computer / network accounts must be terminated before notifying an employee they are being terminated
- Ensure procedures are in place (employee separation checklist) to terminate facility access and computer / network accounts. (Including: web mail, 2FA tokens, remote access / VPN, accounts with 3rd party service providers, etc.)
- Deliver notifications of termination respectfully and in a manner that minimizes intrusiveness and embarrassment
- Evaluate with supervisors and Human Resources the possibility that a terminated employee may be very angry and will not separate from the organization in a peaceful manner. This could present the potential for workplace violence.
- Conduct an exit interview to gauge the separating employee's perspective. (Simply giving the employee a chance to vent could deflate frustration or anger)
- Review intellectual property / non-disclosure agreements with the separated employee
- Have a plan to let employees retrieve their personal belongings
- Establish procedures to inform employees and security guards when termination occurs (all business locations)
- Consider the possibility that a very angry employee that has been terminated may return to the workplace can commit workplace violence. (Even months later)
- Brief facility security guards on response actions for dealing with terminated possible violent employees

## **Protecting The Federal Workforce During The COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Safer Federal Workforce Task Force is led by the White House COVID-19 Response Team, the General Services Administration (GSA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Task Force members include: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Federal Protective Service (FPS), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the United States Secret Service (USSS).

### **Source:**

<https://www.saferfederalworkforce.gov/overview>

Below is a summary of some important topics.

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance:**

Guidance incorporated into all contracts

Workplace safety protocols apply to all covered contractor employees

### **3 Protocols:**

1. COVID-19 vaccination of covered contractor employees, except in limited circumstances where an employee is legally entitled to an accommodation;
2. Compliance by individuals, including covered contractor employees and visitors, with the Guidance related to masking and physical distancing while in covered contractor workplaces; and
3. Designation by covered contractors of a person or persons to coordinate COVID-19 workplace safety efforts at covered contractor workplaces.

### **Misc. Notes:**

- Impacts existing as well as new contracts.
- Agencies are "are strongly encouraged to incorporate a clause requiring compliance with this guidance into contracts that are not covered or directly addressed by the order".
- Covered contractors must ensure that all covered contractor employees are fully vaccinated for COVID-19, unless the employee is legally entitled to an accommodation.
- Medical accommodations may be provided to a covered contractor employee "because of a disability (which would include medical conditions) or because of a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance."
- If you are fully vaccinated: wear a mask indoors, 6ft distancing not required while wearing mask.
- If you are not fully vaccinated: wear a mask at all times indoor and maintain a 6ft distance from others.
- Covered contractors may provide exceptions to mask wearing and/or physical distancing requirements consistent with CDC guidelines (for locations within covered contractor workplaces).
- Protective measures should be adjusted according to local community transmission status.
- Designation of a COVID-19 workplace safety efforts coordinator at worksite.
- An attestation is not an acceptable substitute for documentation of proof of vaccination.

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