

When Community Unrest Spills Over to the Workplace – Five Actions Leaders Can Take

When turmoil is present in our communities, it is undeniable that employees will be affected. Stress, anxiety, frustration, and other emotions will find their way into the workplace as employees bring their whole selves to work.

Here are five critical actions employers can take to support their employees and strengthen their organizations during this time:

1. Communication from Top Leaders

During times of insecurity or fear, employees want to hear from key leaders. Remind employees of your diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as an organization. This is the time to lead, provide direction, and offer compassionate support to come out stronger on the other side.

2. Set Expectations for the Workplace

When emotions run high, tension between employees can occur. It is important to proactively set the tone for behaviors that are acceptable for the workplace and behaviors that will not be tolerated. Refresh and retrain employees on respectful workplace policies, anti-harassment and workplace bullying and inclusion efforts. Communicate consequences of inappropriate behavior or policy violations.

3. Establish Conflict Resolution Practices

Create a process for employees to come forward and report concerns in a safe, responsible manner. Ensure all concerns are reviewed and resolved immediately. Appropriate consequences should be applied in a fair and consistent manner, in accordance with company policy.

4. Address the Impact of Outside Factors

Establish a plan and proactively communicate how municipality curfews, employee participation in protests, social media posts and other outside factors could have an impact on the workplace.

5. Encourage Use of Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Many employers offer employees anonymous and free counseling through their EAP. This resource can be instrumental in helping employees cope and find additional support and resources to navigate through these challenging times.

The bottom line is that employees will want to hear messages from leadership that have a reassuring and supportive tone. Doing so will reinforce the values and culture of the organization and encourage employees to focus on healing and productive outcomes.