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## **Domestic Violence Takes Toll in the Workplace**

**By Ellen Wulfhorst**

NEW YORK (Reuters) – Victims of domestic violence suffer at work as well as home, losing costly work hours to distraction and absenteeism, new research shows.

Women who were victims in the last year lost an average of 249 work hours to distraction, some 40 percent more than non-victims, according to research presented this week to the Academy of Management.

‘In many cases, getting the attention and involvement of for-profit business organizations will require a demonstration of the bottom line costs they incur,’ said the study by Carol Reeves, Collette Arens Bates and Anne O’Leary-Kelly of the University of Arkansas.

‘This provides that type of evidence,’ it said. ‘Employers do not have to choose between minimizing their operating costs and ‘doing the right thing.’’

So-called intimate partner violence costs nearly \$1.8 billion in lost productivity a year, with nearly 8 million paid workdays lost, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Overall, about 40 percent of women and 29 percent of men reported violence from intimate partners at some point in their lives, said the study of almost 2,400 U.S. workers.

‘Any time you have 40 percent of your work force dealing with something, I think that requires attention because that number is huge,’ Reeves said.

Ten percent said the violence took place in the past year and were most likely to suffer in job performance.

Distractions included difficulty concentrating, working slowly, having to do work over or doing no work at all. Male victims lost 244 hours a year to distraction, compared with 202 hours for non-victims, it said.

Women who suffered recent violence also missed 143 hours of work to tardiness or absenteeism, some 26 percent more than non-victims, it said.

In an effort to determine how many U.S. companies have programs to deal with the issue, a survey last year by the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence found about a third of workers believed their company had such a program.

An anti-violence program at Liz Claiborne Inc. has handled over 80 cases in the last five years, although many of its 8,000 U.S. employees may have used its referral services without alerting the firm, spokeswoman Jane Randel said.

‘People look for the black eye, but it’s not always going to be that,’ she said. ‘Things aren’t always exactly what they seem.’

The program’s assistance ranges from changing employees’ telephone numbers to helping them relocate, she said.

‘Our responsibility is to keep this person and those around her safe in the workplace,’ Randel said.

Of the recent victims in the study, one in five reported the problem reaching to their workplace, mostly by stalking.

The researchers surveyed employees at an insurance company, a transportation company and an educational institution. Their findings were presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, a research and teaching organization with nearly 17,000 members.

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