

Safety Planning – Stalking

If in Imminent Danger

The primary goal in imminent danger should be to locate a safe place for you. Safety can be found in the following places:

Police stations _____

Residences of family/friends (location unknown to suspect) _____

Family violence shelters, churches _____

Public areas where the stalker may be less inclined toward violence _____

- If departure from your current location is not possible, contact 911 or another police contact number. Family or friends may be able to assist emergency departure. Caution should be exercised when confronting the offender as stalking sometimes escalates into violence.
- Upon reaching safety, you may want to communicate with local police, victim services, mental health professionals or social services in order to receive additional assistance and referrals. If the stalker caused property damage or physical harm, you may choose to file a report with the police as soon as possible.

At Risk, But Not in Immediate Danger

- If not in immediate danger, you need to assess the probability of impending danger. If you determine you are in a potentially harmful or violent situation, the following options may be considered:

Restraining/Protective/Stay Away Orders

- These orders are only punishable on violation, but set boundaries for conduct
- Provide information or assist the victim to obtain the order
- These orders are not fool proof. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security
- There may be legal costs associated to obtaining the order

Stalking Laws

- Learn about the laws in your jurisdiction

Illegal acts

- Learn about laws regarding home entries, theft, or property damage, physical and sexual assault or threatening. Notifying police of these acts produces documentation necessary for prosecutions. Charges may intimidate the offender and set clear boundaries that the conduct will not be tolerated.

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Documentation

- Stalking activities should be documented and given to police
- Documentation may be useful in future complaints
- Documentation may take the form of photos of destroyed property, vandalism or any inflicted injury, answering machine messages, letters or notes, etc.
- Keep logs of crimes, suspicious activities committed by the offender. Use discretion on entries that may be introduced into evidence at court.

Contingency Plans

- Knowledge of and quick access to critical phone numbers including police, safe places: friends, family, shelters, attorneys, prosecutors, medical care, pet care etc.

Necessities

- Packed suitcase in trunk of car or other safe place for quick departure
- Access to extra money
- Other necessities such as; creditors numbers, personal items such as medications, birth certificates, (and for dependents) etc.
- Miscellaneous items, like gas in the car, keys for neighbours etc.
- If you have children they may want to pack a toy, book, or other special items belonging to them.

Alert Critical People to the Situation who can Assist with Safety Plans

Police _____

Employers _____

Family, friends and neighbours _____

Other security personnel _____

Safety in the Home

- Install dead bolts
- Install adequate outside lighting
- Inform trusted colleagues and neighbours about your situation. Provide them with a photo or description of the suspect and possible vehicle information
- If residing with an onsite manager, provide them with a suspect photo
- Obtain locking/tamper resistant mail box

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- Destroy discarded mail
- Ask police to conduct periodic checks of your residence
- Make sure your street number is clearly marked on your home for emergency response by police
- Install and use a door viewing device
- Consider placing rental agreements or leases, deeds in another name
- Consider changing mailing address

Managing Unwanted Phone Calls/Letters

- Maintain an unlisted phone number and screen calls with an answering machine (have another female record a generic message)
- Treat any threats as legitimate and notify police
- Do not retaliate or take the law into your own hands
- Communicate clearly, and early on, that further contact is not wanted. This can also be achieved through police reporting.
- Never attempt to return letters or unwanted gifts – give to police
- Have co-workers screen business calls

Safety when Traveling

- When out of the home or business, try not to travel alone and try to stay in public areas
- Do not drive home if you are being followed
- If you believe you are being followed, make four right hand turns
- Go to police and honk horn until they come out
- Check passenger compartments before entering vehicle
- Park in welllit areas
- Never leave keys in car or with parking attendants
- Lock vehicle and garage doors
- Check vehicles for signs of tampering, check brakes, look for loosened bolts or hub caps, or disturbances in dust or dirt on the vehicle, check under the hood
- Use car horn to signal in the event of trouble
- Travel in groups of friends if possible
- When traveling, know the location of police stations, fire stations, busy shopping malls or other places of safety
- Use different routes to travel each day

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Other Considerations

- Have realistic expectations of the powers of courts and prosecutions
- Consider the stalking may be long term
- Never underestimate the offender or potential for danger
- Do not rely on others to keep you safe
- Weapons have inherent risks and liabilities
- In extreme cases a change of identity may be considered

General Safety

- Avoid any further direct or indirect contact with the stalker
- Develop alternative contingency plans
- Have continual access to a cellular phone, even in the home
- Inform everyone about the stalker

Other Assistance

Women's shelters/Counselors _____

Sexual Assault crisis counselors _____

Victim advocates service agencies/advocates _____

Victim Support group _____

Adapted from Ontario Provincial Police, Threat Assessment Unit