

Are You Being Stalked?

Important Numbers

Family Service Regina
Domestic Violence Unit757-6675
Isabel Johnson Shelter525-2141
Regina Transition House569-2292
Wichihik Iskwewak Safe House (WISH)543-0493
Regina Police Service.....777-6500 or 9-1-1
Sexual Assault Line352-0434
Mobile Crisis Services757-0127

Other _____

Other _____



Safety for the Stalking Target

Safety in an Emergency:

- CALL 9-1-1. The 9-1-1 operator only needs seconds to trace a landline call. If there's no time to talk, leave the phone off the hook. The operator will trace your call and send the police to your location.
- If calling 9-1-1 from a cell phone, the operator needs to know your location in order to send police. Tell the operator where you are, or provide a familiar landmark, as soon as possible.
- Explain the situation to your children and have a safety plan for them. Your children should never place themselves in danger trying to protect you. In the event of an incident, their priority is to get safe and get help. Teach them how to call 9-1-1, what your address is and where they can access an alternate phone or go for help.
- Be prepared for a dangerous encounter by completing a self-defence class and planning what you will do if the stalker shows up at your home, workplace, school or other places you frequent.
- Scream for help to alert neighbours and passers-by when you need help.
- Have an emergency bag ready and decide on safe places you may go if you need to leave quickly.
- Take threats seriously. Danger is generally higher when the stalker talks about suicide or murder or when a target tries to leave or end the relationship.

Safety at home:

- If you return home to find windows or doors tampered with, do not call out or go in. Call the police from a safe place. Return only when the police have deemed it safe.
- If the stalker gets in your home, **GET OUT**. If the stalker is outside, stay inside and call 9-1-1.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify the doors, windows, elevators or stairwells that provide the quickest, safest exit. Have a rope ladder for escape from second story windows.
- If you do not have a phone, get one. It is your link to emergency services. Program your phone for one-touch access to help. Get a cordless or cell phone to have with you wherever **you** are.
- Secure your doors. A solid core door and a deadbolt with at least a one-inch throw are best. Change your locks and secure spare keys. Place items (stacked tin cans, noisy toys, etc.) in front of doors so the noise will wake or alert you when someone tries to get in.

- Lock windows and patio doors and place sticks or bars in the sliding tracks. Use chimes or bells to alert you when they are being tampered with. Lock and/or bar basement windows. Place clear jars on the inside of windowsills so the breaking glass will alert you when an intruder tries to get in.
- Get a home alarm. This will protect you as well as your home and property when you are gone.
- Ensure your home's exterior is well lit. Install motion sensitive lighting. Trim back bushes and other vegetation around your house.
- If your phone number is unknown or changed, provide it to trusted individuals only. Ensure your number is unlisted and unpublished and that your answering message does not identify you.
- If you have moved or your address is unknown, share it only with trusted individuals. Avoid identifying information on your house or apartment mailbox and buzzer panel. Put utilities and subscriptions in someone else's name. Get a post office box for mail.
- Talk to your children about answering the door and phone and what should not be disclosed.
- Ask your neighbours to call the police when they see or hear anything suspicious.

Safety at work and in public:

- Tell your co-workers about your situation. Provide them with a copy of your protection order and a picture or description of the stalker. Have someone at work screen your visitors and calls.
- Devise a safety plan for going to and from work. Park close to your work entrance. Arrange an escort to and from your car or the bus. Use different routes to and from work.
- Consider transferring to a different work site or branch office, altering your hours of work, changing your schedule or varying the time you leave for and from work. Request shifts where you are not coming in or leaving at night or working alone.
- Designate a co-worker to check on you if you do not arrive at work and have not called in. Provide them with an emergency contact for you.
- Change your routine. Go to different stores, banks, etc. or change the time or the day you attend these places.
- Get an anti-theft device for your vehicle. Park in open, well-lit areas close to your destination. Keep vehicle doors locked and check before getting in.
- If being followed while driving, do not go home or try to lose the stalker. Stay on well-lit, busy streets. Use your cell phone to call for help. During the day, drive to the nearest police station. At night go to a hospital emergency, a fire hall or a busy business and ask (or honk) for help

- When using public transportation, avoid isolated stops. Sit by the driver and ask for the police to be radioed when the stalker is following you or waiting for you at a stop.
- Never go walking alone, particularly at night. Stay in well-lit, populated and familiar areas. When you are being followed, go to a busy public area, an occupied residence or a business to ask for help.
- Know where the crisis service numbers are in the phone book or keep them with you. Carry some change or a calling card for making emergency calls.
- If in doubt, replace credit and calling cards, change your bank PIN, internet server, the codes to your home alarm, message manager and social network server, etc.
- Talk to your children's school, daycare and friend's parents. Provide copies of relevant protection and custody orders and a picture or description of the stalker and vehicle(s) used to stalk you.

Safety and the Law:

- Begin a stalking log. Record the date, time, place and a description of each incident. Save e-mails, phone messages, letters, etc. Photograph damaged property and personal injuries. Ask witnesses to provide written accounts of what they saw and/or heard. Keep the log and evidence in a safe place.
- Notify the police as soon as possible and report each new stalking incident as it occurs.
- Talk to an advocate or the police about getting a protection order and ask for assistance with the process. Always keep a copy of the order with you.
- If you receive harassing or hang-up calls, use your call display and do not answer those you know are meant to harass you. Trace calls by using *57. Record the date, time and what is said. Provide this information to SaskTel and the police.
- Do not be afraid to be firm with the police if they are hesitant to serve you – it is their job. Write to local council representatives, your chief of police and your provincial and federal ministers of justice to get the response you deserve.

Your Emotional Wellbeing:

- **ONCE ONLY**, tell the stalker that you do not want contact then **DO NOT** communicate with the stalker or respond to attempts made to contact you.
- Being stalked impacts all aspects of a target's life. Finding appropriate supports is essential. Seek professional help as soon as possible.
- Tell family and friends about the stalking and seek their support. Ask them to help watch out for the safety of you and your children.

What Stalkers Do:

- Follow you and may unexpectedly show up at places and events where you are.
- Spy on you by driving by, parking near, or lurking around your home, school, work or places you frequent.
- Call you repeatedly, trying to speak to you, leaving messages and/or hanging up.
- Send unwanted gifts, letters, e-mails, etc.
- Arrange situations or events that brings you together.
- Befriend or hang around your friends, co-workers, neighbours or family to gain information about you and your activities.
- Access information about you and your activities through public records, on-line search services, a private investigator, etc.
- Disclose damaging or embarrassing personal information about you to friends, co-workers, neighbours or family members.
- Spread rumours about you that negatively affect your reputation, career or relationships.
- Vandalize your property.
- Burglarize your home or otherwise steal from you, including your mail.
- Leave signs that you are being watched.
- Threaten to hurt you or your family, friends, pets, etc.
- Violate court orders intended to protect you.
- Any actions that controls, tracks or frightens you.
- Get others to stalk you.
- Physically or sexually assaults you, unlawfully confines you or kills you

The Impact of Stalking:

The impact of stalking is often wide-ranging, severe and psychologically traumatic. Many targets feel constantly on alert, vulnerable, out of control, stressed and fearful. They may become irritable, impatient, edgy and angry. Dealing with stalking can consume all their energy. It impacts on daily activities as preoccupation leads to difficulty concentrating and remembering things. They may suffer from insomnia, eating disorders, anxiety and depression. Over time many stalking targets experience a loss of trust, a sense of helplessness and long-term emotional distress.

Stalking may also trigger a wide variety of behavioural reactions and significant disruptions of everyday living. Many targets take steps to avoid being followed and spied upon. They alter their normal routines, avoid going out alone and give up leisure activities. To protect themselves, they screen telephone calls and change their telephone number, e-mail address, driver's license, social insurance number, etc. They may lose time from work or never return to work. More drastic action may include temporary or permanent relocation. This may involve uprooting children, leaving behind close friends and relatives and abandoning careers.

Targets' symptoms tend to worsen with each new incident, and may be compounded by concerns about the effects on their children and other secondary victims. When the criminal justice system fails to protect targets from stalking, it makes it harder to recover. Even if the stalker loses interest, the target is never quite the same. Flashbacks, disturbing thoughts and memories remain a part of the stalking target's life.

"It takes away your life, it's the constant looking over your shoulder, wondering who's watching, what will happen next – it's no way to live"

(Stalking Target)

Stalking and the Law:

Stalking is distinguishable from many other types of crime in two important ways. First, it entails repeat victimization of a person the perpetrator targets – it is, by its very nature, a series of acts, rather than a single incident. Second, it is partly defined by its impact on the target.

Canada's stalking law, referred to in the Criminal Code as "criminal harassment," was introduced in 1993. It reads as follows:

s.264(1) No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or recklessly as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonably, in all the circumstances, to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

- (2) The conduct mentioned in subsection (1) consists of:
- (a) repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;
 - (b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;
 - (c) besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be; or
 - (d) engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family.

Bill C-27 Legislation Summary:

"'Anti-stalking' legislation is a . . . criminal law response to certain threatening behaviours directed largely against women, largely by persons known to them, frequently resulting in violence that may be fatal, and viewed as inadequately addressed by other criminal sanctions."

*Criminal harassment involves a pattern of **overtly criminal and/or apparently innocent** behaviours.*

*Like domestic violence, criminal harassment is a crime of **power and control.***

Simple Obsession Stalkers:

About 75% of all stalking cases fall under the category of simple obsession. This category is characterized by the existence of a previous personal or romantic relationship prior to the stalking behaviour beginning.

The self-esteem of simple obsession stalkers is closely tied to their relationship with the target. Exercising power over another gives them a sense of power in a world where they otherwise feel powerless. Since the target becomes the stalker's primary source of self-esteem, their greatest fear is the loss of this person. When rejected, they feel their life is worthless.

As is the case with domestic violence, stalkers are most dangerous when they are without their source of power and self-esteem; or, when their targets physically remove themselves on a permanent basis by leaving the relationship. Some stalkers will stop at nothing to regain their "lost possession," and in doing so regain their lost self-esteem. Those emerging from violent relationships constitute the most potentially lethal stalking cases.

While no stalking case is completely predictable, this progression is very common for simple obsession stalkers:

"If I can just show you how much I love you."



"I can make you love me!"



"If I can't have you, nobody else will..."

Some stalkers never escalate past stage one. Others jump from the first to the last stage. Still others regress to previous stages before advancing on to the next. This explains some stalkers interspersing episodes of threats and violence with flowers and love letters.

Early intervention is vital to preventing someone escalating from a stalker to a killer.