

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Develop A Support System

Tell supportive and understanding friends about each encounter with the stalker. You can also call Victim/Witness Services (514-4366) and/or the local domestic violence shelter for help and information on support groups.

Managing Stress

You may begin to experience rage, terror, an inability to trust anyone, depression, etc. You are not going crazy. Your body and mind are simply reacting to the extreme stress caused by the continuing victimization.

Talking to someone who is trained to work with victims and survivors may help alleviate some of the symptoms that may be interfering with other aspects of your life.



Help is available...

For assistance or additional information about stalking, contact:

Suffolk Police Department
Emergency 911
Non-emergency 923-2350

The Genieve Shelter
(emergency shelter, crisis counseling, etc.)
925-4365 or 1-800/969-4673

Suffolk Victim/Witness Services
514-4366

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800/799-SAFE (7233)

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-800/FYI-CALL (394-2255)

SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Additional steps you can take to maximize your safety:

1. Have your mail delivered to a post office box. Obtain an unlisted phone number. Change your Social Security number if the stalker is using it to track your whereabouts. Change your routes and routines, whether by car or on foot. Avoid going out alone, especially at night. Keep your car locked, and park in well-lit areas.
2. Inform others. Let people around you – including family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, school officials and police – know what’s going on and enlist their help. Describe the threatening person, as well as any vehicles he/she may drive. Photos work even better. Insist that all of your personal information be kept confidential.
3. Install a loud, exterior alarm, and/or post a “NO TRESPASSING” sign visibly on the edge of your property. A dog is also an effective alarm. Install a car alarm, which can be activated easily if you are threatened.
4. Report threatening calls to the telephone company and to the police. Use *57 or “call trace”, if available in your area. Use of Caller ID may help to identify a stalker who is calling, before you answer the telephone.
5. Report all threats sent by mail to the FBI.
6. If you do move, do not leave a “paper trail”. Take all medical records, children’s school records and children’s immunization records. Do not give the post office a forwarding address. Pick up or forfeit deposit money.

Information in this brochure provided by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY

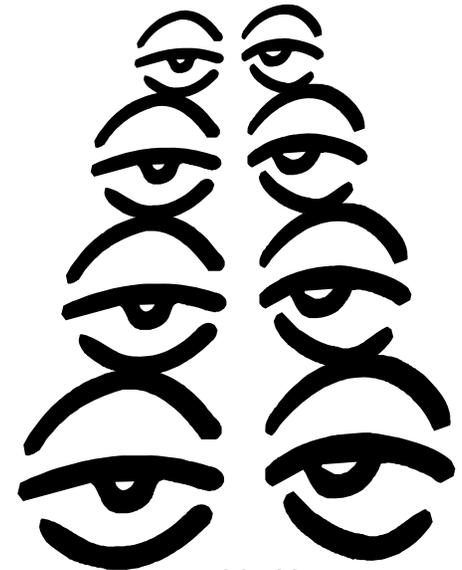


C. Phillips “Phil” Ferguson

“An effective response to stalking includes the entire community: Police, Prosecutors, Advocates, Educators, Healthcare Professionals, Neighbors...everyone can and should play a part in stopping stalking. Working together, we can make victims safer.”

STALKING

A GUIDE FOR VICTIMS



provided by
C. Phillips “Phil” Ferguson
Commonwealth’s Attorney
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150 North Main Street
Suffolk, VA 23434-4552

Visit our Websites:
www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/
www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/vwsp/

757/514-4365

STALKING FACTS

Stalking is a crime. *In Virginia, stalking is defined as repeated conduct which places a person, or his or her family, in reasonable fear of death, sexual assault, or bodily injury.* To convict a stalker, several legal elements of the crime must be proven to the court (see Code of Virginia, §18.2-60.3 on next panel of this brochure).

The stalking law went into effect on July 1, 1992. In 1998, the penalties associated with convictions were increased. A first conviction carries a penalty of not more than one year in jail and up to a \$2,500 fine (Class 1 misdemeanor). The penalty for a third or subsequent conviction within five years is a Class 6 felony and carries a punishment of up to five years in prison or up to 12 months in jail and/or a fine of not more than \$2,500.

Stalking is a unique crime, because stalkers are obsessed with controlling their victims' actions and feelings. Stalkers will frequently threaten and harass, and in many instances will actually physically injure their victims.

Stalking is a crime that can be committed against anyone, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or geographic location.

- ☞ 1.4 million people are stalked annually.
- ☞ Only one half of stalking cases are reported to authorities, and 25% receive a restraining order.
- ☞ 1 in 12 women will be stalked in their lifetimes.
- ☞ 79% of women know their stalkers; 50% were in an intimate relationship with their stalker; 80% of these relationships were abusive.

CODE OF VIRGINIA

18.2-60.3

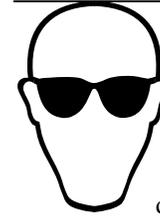
STALKING PENALTY

- A. Any person who on more than one occasion engages in conduct directed at another person with the intent to place, or with the knowledge that the conduct places, that other person in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury to that other person or to that other person's family or household member shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
- B. A third or subsequent conviction occurring within five years of a conviction for an offense under this section or for a similar offense under the law of any other jurisdiction shall be a Class 6 felony.
- C. A person may be convicted under this section irrespective of the jurisdiction or jurisdictions within the Commonwealth wherein the conduct described in subsection A occurred, if the person engaged in that conduct on at least one occasion in the jurisdiction where the person is tried. Evidence of any such conduct which occurred outside the Commonwealth may be admissible, if relevant, in any prosecution under this section provided that the prosecution is based upon conduct occurring within the Commonwealth.

The Code of Virginia also provides that:

- ☞ Upon conviction for stalking, the court must issue an order prohibiting contact between the defendant and the victim or the victim's family or household member. (18.2-60.3D)
- ☞ The Department of Corrections, Sheriff or Regional Jail Director must notify, prior to release of an inmate, any victim of the offense who, in writing, requests notice, or any person designated in writing by the victim, provided the inmate was sentenced to a term of incarceration of at least 48 hours. The responsible agency above must also give notice, if an inmate escapes. (18.2-60.3E)
- ☞ Persons subject to protective orders may not purchase or transport any firearms. (18.2-308.1:4)

IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED



Imminent Danger

Call 911. Go to a safe place—a police station, the home of a family member or friend unknown to the stalker, or a public area. If you are in a potentially dangerous situation, develop a safety plan and notify police.

Tell Everyone

Report the incident to law enforcement. Notify the Commonwealth's Attorney and ask for help from the Victim/Witness Services Program (514-4366). Let them know you are afraid. Give friends, co-workers, and neighbors a description of the stalker. Ask them to document anything they see and record the time of the occurrence.

File Charges

Call police or go to the magistrate immediately and request a warrant each time the stalker breaks the law. The stalker may be arrested. If arrested, there is a possibility that the stalker will be bonded, and released. Ask that a condition of the bond be that there will be no contact with you. Obtain copies of all documents and the name of the magistrate.

Obtain A Protective Order

If a stalking warrant is issued, you may file for a protective order at the General District Court Clerk's Office (514-4822). If the stalker is a family/household member, or you have children in common, contact the Court Services Unit at the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (514-4311).

Necessary Documentation

Record witness names, dates, times, locations, and what the stalker was doing, saying, wearing, driving (license number), etc. Obtain and keep copies of warrants, protective orders, court orders, etc.

Gather Evidence

Physical evidence is a key component to convicting a stalker. If it can be done safely, photograph the stalker. Also, save and date all cards, letters, notes, envelopes and e-mails from the stalker.