

Stalked on the Job

When You Feel Unsafe at Work

When we think of risks at work, rarely do we think of crime and violence. And yet, murder is the number one cause of death for women in the workplace, and one of the leading causes for men. Of those, more than one in eight murders occurs at the hands of a stalker. While most companies are well down the road with sexual harassment policies, workplace violence is a relatively new problem, one that U.S. executives from Fortune 1000 companies said was their number one employee concern.

The Challenge of Protecting You at Work

Avoiding workplace violence perpetrated by an outside stalker is a challenge to the employer for several reasons. First, stalking is a serious crime and a significant risk, one that some companies aren't equipped to handle. A few companies still consider the issue to be a personal one, no different than marital problems and late mortgage payments. So, if you are being stalked, the first thing you need to understand is whether or not your employer has policies, plans, or resources to help, especially if you are concerned for your safety on the job.

No question, employers have an inherent responsibility to protect their employees from violence in the workplace, no matter where it originates. This means there probably are



security specialists on-site who should be alerted if you fear a stalker might come to the workplace looking for you. Tell your supervisor and/or the security department about your fears, including as many details as possible and a photograph of the stalker if you have one.

When Your Company Has No Policy About Stalking

If there is no policy or official company response, ask how you can begin an initiative that would result in specific policies and programs to protect employees against violence from outside sources. Measures can include an emergency response plan and training for security specialists, as well as procedures for dealing with local law authorities on this issue.

If there are no security resources where you work, there are things you can and should do to protect yourself, even if your company is willing to officially help. Any protection, official or not, just might save your life.

How to Protect Yourself While You Are at Work

If your company won't help in an official capacity, chances are it may in other ways. Make sure your coworkers are aware of the situation, along with your supervisor and company security personnel. Show a picture of the suspected stalker, perhaps even post it in the lunchroom. Ask for someone to walk you to and from your car. Make sure you are notified if an outside caller asks about you, and make sure the people receiving any outside calls have been alerted to your situation. If a restraining order is already in place — an essential step if you are fearful of a stalker that you know — make sure to notify the police when such a call comes in, or if the stalker is seen on the premises.

The worst thing you can do is try to handle this problem alone. Sometimes new company policies are a response to an unfortunate emergency situation, so make sure yours is not the one that gets that kind of attention. Your life could be at stake, so do whatever is necessary to protect yourself.