

## Threats & Personal Safety – Tips & Information

Have you received a threat? Are you concerned, for any reason, for the safety of your family or colleagues, or yourself? If so, the human safety and security professionals at Canpro Risk Solutions have compiled the following information to be of assistance.

The attached pages include useful, practical, information relating to:

- Threats
- Tips for personal safety
  - For executives
  - If you believe you are being followed
  - At work
  - In transit
  - In your car
  - Protecting your personal information
  - At home
  - Online
  - Street safety

Your personal safety relies upon your constant awareness, preventative action, and immediate response to threats and safety concerns.

For further, personal assistance, or to find out more about how we can help you, please call Canpro Risk Solutions at the numbers listed below. Our team of over two hundred human safety and security professionals, have experience enhancing the personal safety of persons under threat, both nationally and internationally.

The Canpro Risk Solutions team can assist with related problems such as workplace violence, high-risk terminations, security consulting, threat assessment and management, close personal protection, secure drivers, and much more. Consult our web site for full details at: [www.canproglobal.com](http://www.canproglobal.com)

A part of the Canpro Global group of risk mitigation companies.

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## ***Threats***

It is important to remember that not all persons who make a threat follow-up with an attack, and that not all attackers first make a threat. We suggest that all threats be taken seriously, documented, reported, and acted upon.

A key to personal safety and prevention is perception. Perceiving a threat or assault cue quickly is based upon two factors:

1. Paying attention to your environment and context
2. Predicting what the environment may develop into, and looking for any cues that could develop into a heightened level of risk or violence

Take a moment and consider the following questions (in your personal and professional lives):

- Where and when am I most vulnerable to threat/attack?
  - What is it about the time that makes me vulnerable?
  - What is it about the place that makes me vulnerable?
  - What is it about my actions/task/role/purpose that makes me vulnerable?
- What can I do to prevent threats/attacks at those times and locations?
- What is the “source” of the threat/attack?
  - Do they have the intent to carry through on the threat?
  - Do they have the means to carry through on the threat?
  - What can be done early on to disrupt the threat?
- What could I do in response if I were threatened / attacked at that time or place, or from that source?
- If I were to be threatened / attacked, what could I do afterwards?

The keys to success in personal safety are constant vigilance, situational awareness, and remembering that having a survival mindset will be a substantial help in getting you through.

If somebody does make a decision to attack somebody, research has shown that the following five steps are followed:

1. Locate target of the intended attack
2. Identify target of the intended attack
3. Monitor target. This includes stalking (surveillance) and information gathering
4. Action plan or reaction to the first three steps (planning stage)
5. Aggressor carries out an attack

It is in the first three steps that security and law enforcement professionals are best able to identify and interrupt the attempted/planned attack. This is the best time to take action, with the highest likelihood of success. Waiting and trying to stop an actual attempt in progress is extremely difficult, dangerous, and not always successful.

Watch for signs of unusual activity, and inappropriate communication that could be used to locate and identify a targeted person or group (the first two or three steps). These could include:

- Signs that you are being watched. This usually takes place at locations the aggressor believes are predictable places, and at predictable times, e.g.: work and home, at likely times such as shift changes at work, and dinner hour at home.
- Stolen mail or garbage (attempts to learn more about you)
- Signs of trespass, such as gates left open, comments from neighbour, your dog alerting more often than usual
- Signs of home tampering, such as exterior lights damaged or unscrewed
- Signs of tampering with your vehicle, such as damaged locks or damage rendering the vehicle inoperable
- Attempts to gain entry into residence, garage, work location, or vehicle
- Unusual phone calls, or calls where the caller is trying to identify the person who answered, or others present

Take the above activities as very serious pre-cursors to attack activity. Once someone has been threatened or targeted, activity described above is common prior to a planned attack. Often misinterpreted as vandalism or intimidation, these can also be seen as early warning indicators to more serious activity. For example:

- Should you come out to your vehicle and find it damaged, leave the area immediately and call for assistance. Do not proceed to the vehicle and observe or wait around. It could be an attempt to delay you at a predictable time and place, and render your attempt to depart inoperable
- Finding damage consistent with break and enter, could be a pre-planning attempt to an attack, or a testing of your personal security and awareness

In the past we have had targeted persons withhold information from each other, only to find out later that the same individual had been stalking them all, and gathering information for a attempted/planned attack. The group failed to realize the seriousness of the activity individually, and did not share the information, when in fact, the aggressor had been monitoring them for weeks prior to the event.

Always report any suspicious activity to your local police and cite the existing police file number. As well, always share this information with others of concern, as they may have had similar suspicious activity. Document the incident, in detail, and give a copy to your manager(s).

If you believe that you may be the focus of a targeted attack, take immediate action to disrupt the attack and the attacker, including:

- Remove yourself from predictable places, routines, times, situations
- Immediately notify local police
- Immediately notify manager(s), colleagues, family, friends. Let people know! Ask for specific help – including from local law enforcement authorities
- Make use of all physical security available (see pages on personal and home security)
- Start a diary where you record all details, events, conversations, observations. This may be helpful to law enforcement

In these rare events, you should strongly consider the following actions:

- Tell family & friends. Ask them to also be on the lookout
- Change your travel routes (to and from work)
- Enhance your home security (think in terms of “layers” – fence, dog, lights, doors, alarm and all that each entails)
- Borrow a friend's large dog for a few weeks to keep around the house (this is an excellent home deterrent)
- Have a friend come stay with you for a few days, or staying at a friend's for a few days
- Change your home phone number to an unlisted number
- Screen all incoming calls. If you don't know who it is, let voice mail answer
- Block your phone number from being displayed when you call others
- Change the car you normally drive (includes a change of license plates)
- Drive to and from work with a colleague, or ride with somebody else

Take a moment and ask yourself: “What else can I do early on? What will I do if ..... happens?”

Taking action early on may interrupt many threats and stop the behaviour.

It is not recommended that you personally confront the individual, or have a “well meaning” friend confront the individual or attempt to scare them off in some manner. This is a role best left to the police.

If you are concerned for your personal safety, or that of your family or colleagues, it is strongly advised that you contact your local law enforcement authorities. Be prepared to provide a full, and detailed, written statement. Ask for the file number, and name of the officer(s) involved. Follow-up with them and ask for specific details of what is happening. The *Criminal Code of Canada* has provisions that address threatening behaviour, violent acts, and criminal harassment (stalking).

## ***Tips for Personal Safety***

Threats to personal safety can occur at any time or place. Simple strategies to enhance your personal safety include paying attention:

- While in transit
- In your car
- At home
- At work
- While on the street
- When protecting personal information
- If you suspect you are being followed

There is much that be done, simply and inexpensively, to enhance your personal safety and security. The following pages offer some suggestions and information you can use to enhance your personal safety and that of your family and your home.

### **For Executives**

Executives are often the public “face” of a company, and may become targets of threats and/or violence perpetrated by disgruntled former employees, shareholders, investors, or protest groups motivated by a social or environmental cause.

There are several steps that can be taken to enhance personal safety, including:

- Take all threats and rumours of threats seriously. Document the threat, consider a report to 911, and consider additional safety precautions
- Ensure reception/front desk, and your colleagues, are aware and know what steps to take in case somebody who may pose a threat comes in to the office
- Make neighbours aware you may be at risk. Ask them to notify you immediately of any activity that is out of the ordinary around your home
- Search your name, and those of immediate family members, on Google and social networking sites to check if your name, photograph, home address or other personal information is available freely. If it is, seek to have it removed
- Do not park your car in a spot designated with your name or company name. Consider a new parking location
- Pay attention going to and from the office. Check if anyone is paying particular attention to you or your vehicle
- Vary your personal daily routine. This can include arriving earlier or later than normal, going to a different gym, or a new “regular” lunch spot. Don’t be predictable and easy to find
- Be aware of anyone who might be following/watching you
- Review recent terminations
- Include a risk assessment with every termination. You may want to consider this as a function that is best carried out by a third party organization
- Alcohol dulls the senses. Abstain at work and social functions

### **If You Suspect That You Are Being Followed**

- Be suspicious. Look behind you frequently so the person knows you cannot be surprised
- Cross the street or change direction. Keep a safe (at least 10 meters) distance.
- Know where the “safe places” are along your route
- Go to a well-lit area, enter a residence or building, go to a local shop; anywhere there are people, lights and telephones
- Notice and remember as much as possible
- Report the incident immediately to police

### **At Work**

- Always park your car as close as possible to the entrance, and in a lighted area if at night
- As you arrive at work, survey the area and do a quick risk assessment as you pull in to the parking area. Don't leave your vehicle without doing this
- If you're a smoker and have to smoke outside the building, be aware of where you are and where somebody could be hiding close by. Stand within sight of the video surveillance system if possible
- If possible, avoid working alone after-hours. If this is not possible, let people know where you are and when you'll next check-in with them
- As you leave the building at the end of the day, hesitate as you exit the building and do a quick area risk assessment before you step outside the door. If you see anything that causes any degree of concern, step back in the building and ask for assistance
- Always be aware of where you are, where your escape routes are, where “help” is, and who else is in the immediate area
- Be aware of where the exits are in any given room, and ensure a clear line of egress from each room. Be aware of any obstacles that may pose challenges to leaving a room, such as individuals or furniture between you and the door. If you are concerned about safety issues, try to ensure you are positioned closest to the door

### **In Transit**

- Always have your cell phone with you (make sure it's always fully charged!)
- Travel with others when possible
- Use a buddy system when coming and going from predictable places at predictable times, such as entering and exiting work and residence locations
- Watch to see if you're being followed
- Drive with windows up and doors locked. At times of heightened concern, have the radio off, and pay attention above and beyond normal driving conditions. Drive with a heightened sense of awareness. Be aware of who is behind and ahead of you. Is it the same car for a long period of time?
- Always carry pen and paper readily at hand in your vehicle to write down plate numbers and descriptions
- Know where your safe havens are. Where will you go in the event of being followed, or if you suspect an aggressor is about to attempt action?
- If you are being followed, do not go home or to work. Head to the nearest police station or hospital emergency. Know where you will go, how to get there, and when they will be open. Do you have a plan?
- Immediately use your cell phone to contact police and stay on the line. Quote your police file number (if you have one). Inform them of your route and concerns. Drive towards your safe-haven.

- If you feel you are being followed, keep your vehicle moving, and try not to have to come to a stop. Keep going and don't give up
- Victims have had aggressors bump their vehicle like a minor accident, to bring them to a stop. If you are concerned or recognize the aggressor, do not stop, call police, report the incident and drive to the nearest detachment. Stay on the line and inform of all activity and route

### **In Your Car**

- As you approach your car, have your keys ready. Before entering the car check the back seat to ensure no one is hiding there
- If someone tries to get into your vehicle, drive off immediately. If this is not possible, use your horn to draw the attention of others to what is happening
- When stopped at an intersection or in traffic, always leave one car length between you and the vehicle ahead (can you see where the rear wheels of the car in front touch the road?). In case of emergency, this space provides you space to turn and leave quickly
- If you are approached in traffic by a person on foot or intimidated / threatened / attacked by another vehicle, leave the area immediately. If it's safe to do, go through a red light if you're stopped at one in this instance
- Periodically check your license plates to make sure they have not been stolen, switched or altered
- Always park as close as possible to the entrance of your destination, and within sight of the video surveillance system

### **Protecting Your Personal Information**

Others can use your personal information inappropriately. This use can cause financial harm, damage reputations, or be used by others to gain access to your home, children or personal credit. Steps can be taken easily to protect your personal data.

- First, and most important, buy a home shredder that reduces all bills, invoices, etc. to small pieces of confetti (NOT strips). Get in the habit of using it. Do not discard or place in the recycling bin any piece of paper that has your name, address, phone number or any other personal data on it
- Have all home mail (professional and personal) directed to a PO Box
- Use an unlisted home phone number, and place a block on identifying your number when you call out
- Use caller ID on all incoming phone calls
- File a change of address with Motor Vehicle Branch for your car(s) and driver's license and use your office/work address, or a PO Box
- Vanity license plates on cars do attract attention; some of that attention can pose a risk to you or your family
- Keep your vehicle registration papers hidden in the trunk of your car – NOT in the glove box where thieves can easily find and steal them
- Do not keep any personal papers or personal information in the passenger compartment of your car
- Do not leave an automatic garage door opener (home or office) in plain view in your car
- Don't place a mini replica of a license plate or any personal identification (e.g. name or address) on a vehicle key ring
- Do not use laminated business cards as luggage tags or briefcase tags
- Do not use briefcases or bags that identify you by profession or employer

- Be cautious about who you give out business cards to
- Consider using a business card that uses a generic mailing address rather than your office street address
- Remove your e-mail address from your business card (this can help prevent computer viruses being deliberately sent to you). Vanity license plates on cars do attract attention, some of that attention can pose a risk to you or your family

## **At Home**

- Never hide house keys outside, whether in a bush or in a flower pot
- Never answer the front door without checking and confirming who is there
- Install a peephole in your front door
- When inside, keep your exterior doors locked
- Ensure all exterior doors have strong deadbolts, strike plates and are secured by long screws into a strong door frame
- Close and lock all windows when you leave home
- Trim back tall hedges or shrubs from windows and entrances to remove hiding spots
- Install exterior lights with motion detectors on all corners of your house.
- Keep local emergency numbers taped to each telephone
- Remember your family could also be targeted so ensure they also comply with the good practice illustrated above

For more home security tips, go to <http://www.kwantlen.ca/vpd/intro.html> and also check the Vancouver Police Crime Prevention site [www.vancouver.ca/police/crimeprevention/](http://www.vancouver.ca/police/crimeprevention/)

## **Online**

Most people are unaware of just how much of their personal information, including photographs, home address and phone number, date of birth, names and details of family members, professional and social affiliations, is freely available online. Make it a periodic habit to search for yourself, your family members, and your business using a variety of online tools, not just Google. You may be amazed to find how much information about you is freely available.

- Monitor family use of social network sites, such as Facebook®, LinkedIn®, Xanga®, Myspace®, Classmates.com®, Photolog.com®, as personal details, family photographs, travel plans, etc. may be posted for sharing with friends but also be available to people you simply do not know. If you locate photos or other identifying information about you or your family on others' sites, ask them to remove it
- Check online genealogy sites on a periodic basis for your family name and the dates of birth of family members. Some distant relatives may have posted the family tree online, complete with the full names and dates of birth of everyone in your family
- If you have a home WiFi network, ensure it is password protected so that outsiders cannot access it
- Be careful of buying anything online, and if you do, have a dedicated credit card just for this, with a low credit limit
- Do not open any e-mail sent from an unfamiliar address as it may contain a virus or attempt to load spyware onto your system
- For regular, social e-mail, consider using a free online e-mail account, such as gmail.com, in which you create an e-mail address that bears no resemblance to your real name
- Ensure your home computer anti-virus software is up to date, and is robust enough to protect you against spyware

### **Street Safety**

- Stay in well-lit areas. Walk midpoint between curbs and buildings, and try to keep from using alleys or less traveled routes between buildings
- Stay near people and avoid taking short cuts alone through vacant lots and other deserted places
- Carry only necessary ID, cards and money
- Do not stop to provide strangers with directions or information, especially at night
- Walk with someone else whenever possible and set up a buddy system with your friends
- Do not jog alone late at night, or walk/run through trails alone. Take somebody with you, or run with a medium to large size dog (borrow a friend's dog if you can)

### **Additional Online Personal Safety Information**

For much more information on steps you can take to enhance the personal safety of you and your family, go to [www.safecanada.ca](http://www.safecanada.ca)

Your personal safety and security depends on your constant situational awareness, and the choices you make!