

General Safety Tips

Safety planning can be an overwhelming process. Take your time, and begin with the tasks that apply most to your situation to meet your immediate needs. When situations change, or as needed, review the other safety tips.

At Work

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (Bill 168)- Workplace Obligations:

Workplaces in Ontario with more than 5 employees are required to have written policies addressing violence and harassment including measures and procedures to assess and control the risk, including having a reporting structure for employees to report threats or incidents of violence.

Employers need to take reasonable precautions to protect workers from domestic violence that may occur within the workplace. They are also required to educate workers about the policy and program, and inform a worker about any risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour if it is likely the worker will come into contact with that person in the workplace.

- Bill 148 – A Plan for Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs:

An employee who has been employed for at least 13 consecutive weeks is entitled to up to 10 individual days of leave and up to 15 weeks of leave if the employee or their child experiences domestic or sexual violence (including threat of). The first 5 days of leave in each calendar year will be paid and rest is unpaid.

- Consider telling your employer, the receptionist, the security supervisor, or other key people of your situation and ask about measures to assist you with safety.
- If possible, provide your workplace with a photo of your (ex)partner and a description of vehicle(s).
- Ask to have your calls screened and document all harassing or unusual calls.
- Inquire about secure parking and/or accompaniment to your car at night.
- Change your patterns for arrival and departure from work and inquire about flex hours if possible.
- Ask about changing your work station.
- Let someone know when you arrive at a location and note your expected arrival time.

Outside or in the Community

- Avoid isolated places – stay with groups of people.
- Change your routine frequently – do not be predictable.

- Re-schedule appointments your (ex) partner is likely to be aware of.
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Keep copies of court orders with you at all times.
- When you are walking or driving, notice potential avenues for help such as open stores, offices, etc.
- Have a cell phone available and ensure it is charged at all times.
- If calling 911, state your location first then other details.
- Know where you are – name of street, major intersection and landmarks.
- Consider downloading the Red Panic Button App on your smartphone: <http://redpanicbutton.com/> (see Technology Insert for more information).

Safety While Walking

- Avoid walking alone.
- Avoid dark and isolated places.
- Walk with head upright, be observant and observe others around you.
- Take the safest route and not the quickest route.
- Walk on well-lit streets.
- Walk on the side of the street with the traffic oncoming.
- Do not hug corners, take them wide.
- Avoid using earphones.
- Be aware of shadows and silhouettes to know if someone is nearby.
- Have your cell phone on hand and check you have reception.
- Use parks during the daylight hours and when others are in the park.
- Make sure you know where you are: street name, town, park name, etc., so you can give accurate information if you need to contact police.
- If attacked or approached by your (ex)partner or someone else while out, use your cell to call 911. Scream, shout and draw attention to yourself.
- Do not retreat to an isolated area – GO TOWARDS A BUSY AREA.

Safety on Public Transit

- Sit near the bus driver.
- On GO Train- sit in busy sections or where there is a transit official (i.e. accessible carts).
- Note safety features on bus or train. Use them if needed.
- Ask bus driver to drop you off closer to your destination.
- If possible have someone walk you home from bus stop.
- Be aware of your surrounding (avoid using items that distract you).
- Have extra bus fare or money in case you have to take another bus to get away from someone.
- If in danger, yell and scream for help.
- Have someone to text or call when you arrive home safely. Come up with a plan with this person on what to do if they don't hear from you.

Elevator Safety

- Step back from the elevator and wait for the doors to open.
- Scan elevator before entering.
- Stand near control panel.
- Do not get on an elevator with someone who makes you feel uneasy.
- If you are uncomfortable, get off the elevator on the next floor if safe to do so.
- If attacked, push alarm and as many floor buttons as possible.

Parking Lots: Entering a Vehicle

- Park where there is sufficient lighting
- Walk with a buddy after hours
- Keep your car locked at all times
- Walk with confidence
- Be alert
- Carry your keys in your hand
- Check the backseat before getting in car

Parking Lots: Exiting a Vehicle

- Drive around parking lot once before parking to note any activity
- Park in well-lit area and close to an entrance or elevator or security
- Turn car off and listen for noises before exiting
- Be aware of odors (i.e. cigarettes, cologne)
- Keep keys in hand

Safety While Driving

- Consider using your in-car roadside assistance (e.g. ON-STAR) if available in your vehicle.
- Do not leave anything in your car that has your home address (i.e. insurance, registration)
- Have someone walk you to your car when possible.
- Change car door lock codes
- Keep your car locked while you are in the car.
- Secure children and belongings in the car quickly and securely, get in and lock the doors.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good working order.
- Have at least ½ tank of gas. Fill with gas during the day when possible.
- Know where you are going and have an alternate route planned.
- Vary your driving routes.

- Keep a safe distance from the car in front of you and have an escape route planned.
- Have a cell phone with you and a car charger.
- Keep a sign in your vehicle that you can use if required that says CALL POLICE, you can use this when being followed or broken down.
- If you become stranded do not accept help from a stranger, stay in the vehicle and use your cell phone to summon help. Only exit your vehicle if it is in an unsafe position on the road.
- When parking your car always back into parking space so you can pull straight out of and have no blind spots.
- Be vague with your car GPS regarding your home and work address.
- Change your car registration and insurance into your name. Notify them not to share you information with your (ex)partner.
- Don't leave garage door opener in car. Change garage door opener code - do this frequently.

If you are being followed in your vehicle

- Note the license plate if you can, as well as the make and model of the vehicle following you.
- Call police and drive to the nearest open Police station if possible or a busy open place such as a coffee shop or a place with cameras such as a gas station. Don't exit the car unless safe to do so.
- While driving beep your horn and flash your lights to get noticed by others so you scare off the person following you.