

# When Stalking Enters the Workplace

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In our previous installments, we discussed stalking as it arises out of the domestic environment. The profile of a stalker is most likely an ex or current lover of the victim. Women are stalked at a higher rate than men. The act of stalking is a means of controlling a victim's life.

Controlling a victim does not end where the steps of the workplace begins. Companies are discovering that when stalking enters the workplace the problem expands from an issue for one to an issue for many.

It is true that the majority of stalkers are intimates of the victim, but stalkers have also been known to be co-workers or supervisors. Remember the definition of stalking? *Any person who willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or willfully and maliciously harasses another person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for his or her safety.*

## **Electromagnetic Systems Laboratory (ESL)**

There was a famous local stalking case in 1988 at ESL in Sunnyvale, CA. where Richard Farley stalked a co-worker, Laura Black, for four years. Farley was obsessed with Black, sending her letters, calling her, showing up at her aerobics classes, renting a unit in her apartment building that forced her to move.

On February 2, 1988 Black obtained a temporary restraining order against Farley and another court date to make the order permanent was set for February 17, 1988.

Farley was desperate to convince Black to rescind the order. He would later say to a judge that he never planned to kill; he just wanted to get Black's attention or commit suicide in front of her for rejecting him.

Despite Farley's explanation of the events, it is documented that on February 16, 1988 Farley had in his possession several guns when he arrived at ESL. Farley was also wearing an ammunitions vest, earplugs and leather gloves. As he walked into the ESL building Farley opened fired, shooting as he approached Black's office. In the end seven people were dead and four more wounded including Black. Miraculously Black survived and continued to work for ESL. Farley was sentenced to death. However, because of the appeal process in California he is currently serving in San Quentin.

## **Stalking = Workplace Violence**

It is sobering to learn that according the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, homicide is the second highest cause of death on the job, after motor vehicle accidents. It is estimated that each working day three people will be murdered on the job and one million will be assaulted each year.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports, about 130,000 victims were fired because of problems arising from stalking. About one-in-eight victims took time off from work in fear of safety or to seek a restraining order from the court.

## **What To Do**

The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health set out Guidelines for Workplace Security in 1994, which required employers to put in place a Violence Prevention Program within their existing safety programs that would create procedures to protect employees from workplace violence.

The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care & Social Service Workers recommends: *At a minimum, workplace violence prevention programs should:*

- *Create and disseminate a clear policy of zero tolerance for workplace violence, verbal and nonverbal threats and related actions. Ensure that managers, supervisors, coworkers, clients, know about this policy.*
- *Ensure that no employee who reports or experiences workplace violence faces reprisals.*
- *Encourage employees to promptly report incidents and suggest ways to reduce or eliminate risks. Require records of incidents to assess risk and measure progress.*
- *Outline a comprehensive plan for maintaining security in the workplace. This includes establishing a liaison with law enforcement representatives and others who can help identify ways to prevent and mitigate workplace violence.*
- *Assign responsibility and authority for the program to individuals or teams with appropriate training and skills. Ensure that adequate resources are available for this effort and that the team or responsible individuals develop expertise on workplace violence prevention.*
- *Affirm management commitment to a worker-supportive environment that places as much importance on employee safety*
- *Set up a company briefing as part of the initial effort to address issues such as preserving safety, supporting affected employees and facilitating recovery.*

Stalking is not the fault of the victim. Thankfully shifts in attitude, along with federal and local laws, have encouraged companies to establish strong anti-violence policy/procedures and a commitment to keep employees safe in the workplace.

#### **Resources (links)**

**[Violence Prevention Brochure: Maintaining A Safe Workplace](#)**

**[The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)**

**[Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care & Social Service Workers](#)**

**[The stalking of Laura Black](#)**

**[Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)**

If you have any questions about Sub Rosa, AOE/COE, Fraud or Investigation, email me. at **[david@2mypi.com](mailto:david@2mypi.com)**