

Safety in Rural Areas

If you live in a remote area or a small community, there are some extra things to keep in mind when you're creating a safety plan.

1. IT MAY TAKE THE POLICE A LONG TIME TO GET TO YOU.

- If you call the police, get to a safe place to wait for them to arrive. You may want to go to the home of a trusted friend or neighbor, or to a public place you think is safe.
- If you decide to leave the abuser, think about leaving your area, at least for a little while. Think about it even if you get a protective order.

2. A LOT OF TIMES, THERE AREN'T ANY TAXIS, OR OTHER TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE NEAR WHERE YOU LIVE, AND THE ABUSER MAY KEEP YOU FROM USING THE CAR. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A CAR, AND YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF THE HOME TO STAY SAFE, YOU MAY WANT TO:

- Make a plan with a trusted friend who can give you a ride whenever you need one.
- See if your local RCMP can help escort you out of the home to get to a safe place.
- See if any local churches can connect you with someone who would be willing to drive you.
- Talk with a domestic violence advocate, shelter worker, wellness worker or Victim Services to see if their organization can provide you with transportation when needed. If not, the advocate may be able to help you make a plan to get a ride when you need one.

3. IF YOU LIVE IN A COMMUNITY WHERE HUNTING IS COMMON, THE ABUSER IS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE GUNS AND OTHER WEAPONS IN THE HOME (OR HAVE ACCESS TO THEM) THAN AN ABUSER WHO LIVES IN A CITY.

- Know where guns, knives, and other weapons are. If you can, lock them up or make them as hard to get to as possible.
- Figure out "safe places" in your home – the places where there aren't weapons. If it looks like the abuser is about to hurt you, try to get to a safe place. Stay out of the kitchen, garage, workshop or other areas where there are weapons within arm's reach.

Information adapted, in part, from SafeHorizon.org and, in part, from PrivacyRights.org.

4. IF YOU LIVE, WORK AND/OR SPEND TIME IN ISOLATED AREAS WHERE NEIGHBORS AND PASSERSBY CANNOT SEE OR HEAR WHAT IS GOING ON, THIS COULD INCREASE YOUR DANGER LEVEL.

- Try to stay away from isolated areas whenever you can. (We recognize that if you live or work in a remote area, there may not be an easy way to change this.)
- Travel in groups whenever possible. If you can, have someone in charge of paying attention to safety and what's going on around you.
- Consider leaving the area, at least for a little while. Consider doing so even if you get a court order.
- Carry a cell phone if you can, but don't count on it too much. Cell phones may not get good service in some places, and batteries do run out. Have emergency numbers like 911 on speed dial.

5. SAFE PLACES, LIKE A FRIEND'S HOUSE OR A SHELTER, MAY BE FAR AWAY.

- If you have access to a car, try to always have a full tank of gas in case you need to get to a far-away place in a hurry.
- Keep cold weather clothing (like a hat, scarf, and jacket) in an easy-to-reach place for you and your children, so that you can quickly have access to them if you need to flee. If you can, keep them in your car.
- Be aware of where neighbors live along the road in case you ever need to pull the car over and run to a neighbor for help.

6. IF YOUR COMMUNITY IS VERY SMALL, PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN YOUR AREA MAY KNOW WHERE THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER IS. IN OTHER WORDS, THE SHELTER LOCATION MAY NOT BE CONFIDENTIAL.

- Be aware that the abuser and other people may know where the shelter is and so you cannot let your guard down when entering and exiting the shelter.
- Think about going to a shelter outside of the area where you live, even if it's only for a little while.
- If you go to a local shelter, you may want to cover your car with protective car-cover. This can help keep the abuser and other people from seeing your car from the street while it is parked in the parking lot.

7. THE ABUSER MAY BE WELL-KNOWN AND WELL-LIKED IN THE COMMUNITY AND MAY BE IN A POSITION OF POWER.

- Try to speak with a neutral and trusted friend or family member and make a plan to leave with him/her if you feel unsafe calling the police.
- Although gathering and keeping evidence of the abuse, including text messages, pictures, and emails, is important in any situation, it may be even more important in situations in which the abuser is in a position of power within the community. In small communities where the abuser may be well-known and/or highly regarded, others in the community may put more weight on the abuser's word over yours; having tangible (concrete) proof of the abuse may help to prove your allegations.