



Website Safety

Tips for Advocacy Organizations

SAFETY ALERT: If you are in danger, please use a safer computer, or call 911, your local hotline, or the U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224. See more technology safety tips [here](#). There is always a computer trail, but you can [leave this site quickly](#).



⇒ **Victims should see a brief safety alert as SOON as they arrive on ANY domestic violence, sexual violence, or stalking web page.**

For some victims, merely visiting a domestic violence, sexual violence, or stalking website may be dangerous. There are many other places on the computer where details about web searches are kept, in addition to the browser history, cookies, and cache.

- **An alert similar to the one above should be at the top of every page** of a website because someone can get to a page by clicking on a link from a search engine or another site and bypass the homepage where the safety alert is posted.
- We recommend including an ESCAPE button with your safety alert that links to a reliable website that loads quickly (such as Google). This allows a victim looking at your website to quickly click away in case someone comes into the room. It's important to include the button WITH a safety alert so that victims understand that the computer will still have a trail that shows they've visited your website.

⇒ **On a separate page, such as a "website safety page," organizations can post SOME details about computer and Internet safety WITHOUT giving too much information to perpetrators.**

Giving victims additional information on the phone or in person may be safer. Remember, if a victim can find your websites online, so can an abuser.

- **Encourage victims to use a SAFER computer** at a library, a community center, or a local advocacy program. This tip is especially important if a victim is researching options for leaving the abusive relationship. If the abuser knows that the victim is looking at bus tickets, domestic violence shelter information, or rental ads on a home computer, this could increase risk. Give examples of a safer computer; a victim might think a home computer is most private without realizing that the abuser could be spying on it. Also use the word "safer" computer rather than "safe" since we can never guarantee that a particular computer will be completely safe.

⇒ **Can I just tell victims to "clear" and "delete" their history trail?**

Clearing or deleting a browser history does not guarantee that the trail is completely erased. Telling victims to clear histories could increase their risk and give a false sense of safety. It is not possible to clear ALL web browsing history on the computer.

- Keep in mind that if an abuser/stalker is currently monitoring a victims' web browsing history and sees a completely empty history all of a sudden, the abuser/stalker may become suspicious and escalate the controlling behavior.
- If your organization wants to post information on clearing web browsing history, you can give suggestions on how to "reduce" browsing history records. It is impossible (and incorrect to say) that one can completely remove all record of browsing history because it would depend on operating system, software versions, etc.



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- Furthermore, the computer may be compromised by Spyware. Spyware logs all computer activities, including attempts at clearing the trail. Spyware is often impossible to detect without a forensic examination of the hard drive. Like computer viruses, there are hundreds of Spyware and monitoring programs, often created by large software companies with the alleged purpose of monitoring employees or children, while others are written by creative "hackers" with the intent of obtaining computer records.

⇒ Is there anything I can do to make emailing us any safer?

Sometimes, victims or individuals who visit domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking organizations' sites, want to contact the organization via email. Most sites have a "contact us" section that includes email addresses. When a victim clicks on the email address and sends an email, their default email program will keep a copy of that email in the "sent" folder, which abusers may find.

Webforms allow visitors to contact organizations without using their email account. Webforms can be set up so that it goes directly to the person at that organization who handles web inquiries. After the initial contact, advocates can work with victims to determine safe methods of communicating. Website designers can incorporate webforms into organizations' website.

Example

The Safest or Best Way to Reply is:

- No reply needed
- Please call me at the phone number above between 9am and 5pm Eastern Time.
- It is safe to email me at the e-mail address I listed above. *Note: Be sure that someone dangerous to you doesn't know the password to your computer or account.*
- Please mail me the materials I mentioned above. *(Many of NNEDV's materials are available free of charge via email and we will send them to you as an attachment. NNEDV will send a paper packet if you do not have a private email address, but prefers to email information when it is safe for you.)*

Sample Website Language - This text can be used verbatim and posted to your website.

For more, see <http://www.nnedv.org/internetsafety.html>

Internet and Computer Safety



If you are in danger, please try to use a safer computer that someone abusive does not have direct or remote (hacking) access to.

- If you think your activities are being monitored, they probably are. Abusive people are often controlling and want to know your every move. You don't need to be a computer programmer or have special skills to monitor someone's computer and Internet activities – anyone can do it and there are many ways to monitor with programs like Spyware, keystroke loggers and hacking tools.
- It is not possible to delete or clear all the "footprints" of your computer or online activities. If you are being monitored, it may be dangerous to change your computer behaviors such as suddenly deleting your entire Internet history if that is not your regular habit.