

## **Stalking Sacks**

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Stalking victims can take an active role to increase their own safety and document stalking incidents. Stalking sacks-literally bags of resources-empower stalking victims with tools to help them focus on safety, document the crime, and learn more about stalking. Stalking sacks were first developed by victim advocates working in domestic violence shelters and have been customized for stalking victims in communities across the country.

The contents of stalking sacks vary depending on the victim's needs, local laws, and funding. Communities, for example, may find that most stalking victims already have a cell phone but do not own a flashlight. Or some jurisdictions may have laws that forbid the use of pepper spray but allow personal alarm systems. To lower costs, companies or individuals in the community can donate items for the sack. Items can also be reused.

The list below includes **Standard Contents**-items that are likely to be useful and legal in all communities and **Possible Contents**-items that are useful and legal in some communities but not others.

### **Standard Contents**

#### **Safety**

- Safety plan
- Cell phone (with charger)
- Flashlight (with batteries)

#### **Information Collection**

- Stalking log
- Disposable camera (with time/date recorder if available)
- Wrist watch (providing time and date)
- Notebook and pen

#### **Stalking Information**

- Stalking brochures
- Business cards of a local investigator, prosecutor, and advocate
- Books on stalking (e.g. Stalking: A Handbook for Victims by Emily Spence-Diehl, available for free download)
- List of books, Web sites, and other resources on stalking

Town of Ossining Police Department, 914-762-6007 or 911, TOPD@OssiningTownPolice.com –  
www.townofossining.com/depts/police/  
The Westchester County Office For Women, 914-995-5972, www.westchestergov.com/women/  
The Northern Westchester Shelter, 24-Hour Hotline 888-438-8700, www.northernwestchestershelter.org  
National Center for Victims of Crime, Stalking Resource Center 2007 -www.ncvc.org/src

## **Possible Contents**

(Based on community needs and state laws)

### **Safety**

- **Dead bolt buddy**  
The dead bolt buddy is a device that attaches to any dead bolt knob and prevents the lock from opening even if the intruder has a key.
- **Pepper spray**  
Pepper spray may help a victim escape an attack but may not be legal in some jurisdictions. Any victim who chooses to carry pepper spray should be encouraged to receive proper training on its use.
- **Personal alarm**  
This small, portable alarm can be attached to windows and doors and will produce a loud noise if the window or door is opened. It also can be attached to a belt or scarf that will set off the alarm when the strap is pulled. (Note: if the personal alarm is too expensive, a whistle can be included in the sack.)

### **Information Collection**

- **Plastic zip-lock bag and powder-free latex gloves**  
Victims can use these items to collect evidence-but only as a last resort when it is clear that police will not come to the scene or that the evidence will be moved, damaged, or altered before the police arrive. Remember that collecting evidence is the job of law enforcement, and under most circumstances, victims should wait for the police to perform this task.
- **Micro-Cassette Recorder (with tape)**  
If tape-recording without permission is legal in their states, victims can use tape recorders to tape any conversation with the stalker. Jurisdictions have different laws on what kind of recordings (including in-person and phone discussions) can be used as evidence, and recording a person without his/her permission is illegal in some states. Check your jurisdiction's laws on this option before recommending it to a victim.

**Source:** The above information was compiled from sacks developed by various victim service programs in Maryland and Virginia. Many of the listed items are taken from materials developed for Understanding Stalking Cases- Building a Foundation, a conference presented by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime in September, 2002.