Stalking

Stalking is a serious offense that can escalate quickly and may be associated with other forms of violence. This course prepares telecommunicators to recognize potential stalking incidents, identify patterns of behavior that may indicate stalking, gather critical information from callers, assess the level of threat posed by a suspect, and provide appropriate Pre-Arrival Instructions based on the circumstances of the incident. Learners examine stalking motives and relationships, indicators that stalking may be a component of another call for service, jurisdiction and location considerations, threat assessment, and strategies for protecting callers.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Identify the signs of a possible stalking incident.
2. Recognize what information is important to gather from a caller reporting a stalking incident.
3. Determine appropriate Pre-Arrival Instructions based on the nature of the stalking incident.
4. Recognize patterns of repeated behavior and victim fear that may indicate stalking.
5. Assess factors that may increase the level of danger to a stalking victim.

Module 1: Stalking Call

This module introduces the seriousness and potential escalation of stalking through a real-world 911 call involving a woman whose former boyfriend attempts to enter her home and subsequently uses a firearm. The call demonstrates how an incident initially dispatched as another crime can reveal the immediate dangers associated with stalking and domestic violence.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Recognize warning signs of stalking within an emergency call.
2. Describe how a stalking situation can rapidly escalate into violence.
3. Identify changes in circumstances that increase the priority of an emergency response.
4. Explain the importance of continually monitoring caller safety as an incident develops.
5. Recognize how stalking may initially be reported or dispatched as another type of crime.

Content/Activities

- Stalking Call Introduction
- “The Phone Rings in Dispatch” Audio and Transcript
- Dispatch Is Initiated
- Return to the Caller
- Escalation and Gunfire During the Call
- Westword News Case Summary
- Reflection on the Dangers of Stalking

Module 2: What is Stalking?

This module defines stalking as a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety. Learners examine repeat victimization, the impact of stalking on the victim, common stalking motives, and the relationship between stalkers and their victims. The module emphasizes that stalking generally involves a series of incidents rather than a single act and that the victim's fear is a critical consideration.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define stalking as a pattern of behavior that causes reasonable fear for a person's safety.
2. Explain the importance of repeat victimization and the impact of stalking behavior on the victim.
3. Differentiate among Simple Obsessional, Love Obsessional, Erotomania, and False Victimization Syndrome stalking motives.
4. Distinguish between intimate and non-intimate stalker relationships.
5. Explain why a prior intimate relationship is not required for stalking to occur.

Content/Activities

- Definition and Pattern of Stalking Behavior
- Repeat Victimization and Impact on the Victim
- Types of Stalkers
- Simple Obsessional Stalking
- Love Obsessional Stalking
- Erotomania and False Victimization Syndrome
- Intimate and Non-Intimate Relationships
- Interactive Stalking Motives and Relationship Review

Module 3: How to Identify a Stalking Incident

This module focuses on recognizing stalking when the caller may not explicitly identify the situation as stalking. Learners examine crimes and behaviors that may be components of a stalking pattern, including domestic violence, sexual assault, criminal damage, burglary, harassment, threats, trespassing, technology-facilitated monitoring, and repeated unwanted contact. Learners also consider the victim's fear and prior reports or protection orders when evaluating a possible stalking incident.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify calls for service that may contain an underlying stalking component.
2. Recognize repeated behaviors commonly associated with stalking.
3. Differentiate isolated incidents from patterns of threatening or harassing behavior.
4. Explain why a victim's expressed fear should be taken seriously even when individual behaviors appear harmless.
5. Identify prior reports and protection orders that may provide important context for a possible stalking incident.

Content/Activities

- Recognizing Stalking in Other Calls for Service
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Indicators
- Criminal Damage and Related Offenses
- Following, Surveillance, and Unwanted Contact
- Technology-Facilitated Monitoring and Tracking
- Threats to Victims, Family, Friends, or Pets
- Victim Impact Statements
- Review of Prior Reports and Protection Orders

Module 4: Knowledge Check

This module provides learners with an opportunity to apply concepts from the first three modules. Questions assess understanding of stalker motives and relationships as well as the ability to identify behavioral patterns that may indicate a stalking incident.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Differentiate intimate and non-intimate stalking relationships.
2. Match common stalking motives with their typical relationship characteristics.
3. Analyze reported behavior for patterns that may indicate stalking.
4. Apply course concepts to scenario-based stalking incidents.

Content/Activities

- Erotomania Relationship Knowledge Check
- Love Obsessional Relationship Knowledge Check
- False Victimization Syndrome Knowledge Check
- Simple Obsessional Relationship Knowledge Check
- Possible Stalking Victim Scenario
- Neighbor Stalking Scenario
- Select-All-That-Apply Behavioral Indicators

Module 5: Information Gathering

This module addresses the information telecommunicators should gather during a possible stalking call. Learners focus on the relationship between the caller and suspect, the caller's fear, repeated behavior, prior offenses and protection orders, locations and jurisdiction, the suspect's current location, suspect and vehicle descriptions, specific threats, weapons, and other factors that contribute to threat assessment.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Gather information about the relationship between the caller and suspect and determine whether the reported behavior is repeated.
2. Identify what caused the caller to fear the suspect and assess the significance of that fear.
3. Determine relevant locations and jurisdictions associated with the stalking incidents.
4. Obtain information about the suspect's current location, description, vehicle, and direction of travel.
5. Assess threat factors including prior violence, specific threats, and access to weapons.

Content/Activities

- Relationship, Fear, and Repeated Behavior
- Prior Offenses and Protection Orders
- Location and Jurisdiction
- Harassment and Threats Call Audio/Transcript
- Identifying Relevant Addresses
- Suspect Location and Description
- Threat Assessment
- Specific Threats and Weapons Assessment

Module 6: Protecting the Caller

This module emphasizes that victim safety is the primary focus of a stalking call. Learners review how Pre-Arrival Instructions should change depending on whether the suspect is not near the caller, outside or on the way to the caller's location, or already inside the caller's location. The module also addresses evidence preservation, safe relocation, securing a location, avoiding areas where weapons are accessible, and remaining on the line when appropriate.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Prioritize victim safety when handling a stalking incident.
2. Determine appropriate Pre-Arrival Instructions based on the suspect's location.
3. Provide safe-location guidance when the suspect is not near the caller.
4. Provide protective instructions when the suspect is outside, approaching, or inside the caller's location.
5. Explain when documentation and preservation of stalking evidence may be appropriate.

Content/Activities

- Determining When the Incident Occurred
- Suspect Not Near the Caller's Location
- Stalking Incident Log and Evidence Preservation
- Suspect Near the Caller's Location
- Suspect Inside the Caller's Location
- Safe Rooms and Areas to Avoid
- Suspect Outside or on the Way
- Staying on the Line and Maintaining Caller Safety

Module 7: Knowledge Check

This module tests learners' ability to select appropriate Pre-Arrival Instructions based on the suspect's proximity to the caller. Learners distinguish between instructions for situations in which the suspect is not nearby, is outside or approaching the location, or is already inside the caller's location.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Match Pre-Arrival Instructions to the suspect's location relative to the caller.
2. Identify appropriate safety instructions when a suspect is inside the caller's location.
3. Identify appropriate safety instructions when a suspect is outside or approaching the caller's location.
4. Identify appropriate instructions when the suspect is no longer near the caller.

Content/Activities

- Avoiding Rooms with Accessible Weapons
- Selecting a Secure Room
- Documenting Stalking Behaviors in an Incident Log
- Locking Doors and Windows and Using Exterior Lights
- Moving to a Neighbor's Home or Police Station
- Pre-Arrival Instruction Scenario Review

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within 30 minutes.

- CE hours awarded: 1
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser