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## CPD Shares Resources for National Stalking Awareness Month

**January 6, 2011** – January is National Stalking Awareness Month, a time to focus on a crime that affects 3.4 million victims a year.<sup>1</sup> This year’s theme—“Stalking: Know It. Name It. Stop It.”— challenges the nation to fight this dangerous crime by learning more about it.

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, yet many victims and criminal justice professionals underestimate its seriousness and impact. In one of five cases, stalkers use weapons to harm or threaten victims,<sup>2</sup> and stalking is one of the significant risk factors for femicide (homicide of women) in abusive relationships.<sup>3</sup> Victims suffer anxiety, social dysfunction, and severe depression at much higher rates than the general population, and many lose time from work or have to move as a result of their victimization.<sup>4</sup>

Stalking is difficult to recognize, investigate, and prosecute. Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable crime but a series of acts, a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause that person fear. Stalking may take many forms, but in order for it to reach a criminal level, a credible threat of death or serious bodily harm must be present. One in four victims reports that the stalker uses technology, such as computers, global positioning system devices, or hidden cameras, to track the victim’s daily activities.<sup>5</sup> Stalkers fit no standard psychological profile, and many stalkers follow their victims from one jurisdiction to another, making it difficult for authorities to investigate and prosecute their crimes.

Communities that understand stalking, however, can support victims and combat the crime. The Cambridge Police Department offers resources on our website at <http://www2.cambridgema.gov/CPD/CommRes/domesticviolence.cfm> to promote awareness and public education about stalking and we would like to remind people to educate themselves about the resources available to them during this annual observance.

For additional resources to help promote National Stalking Awareness Month, please visit <http://stalkingawarenessmonth.org> and <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov>.

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1 Baum et al., Stalking Victimization in the United States, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/svus.pdf> (accessed September 29, 2009).

2 Ibid.

3 Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., “Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multi-site Case Control Study,” American Journal of Public Health 93 (2003): 7.

4 Ibid.

5 Baum, Stalking Victimization in the United States.

