

What You Should Know About Avoiding Rape and Sexual Assault in the Federal Workplace



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The subject of this pamphlet, *What You Should Know About Avoiding Rape and Sexual Assault in the Federal Workplace*, deals with crimes that we all hope will never happen to any of us. But these kind of crimes **do** happen and are devastating for the victim.

Rape and sexual assault are particularly difficult to prevent in some Federal buildings because assailants can take advantage of miles of corridors. And, in addition, there are countless restrooms, stairwells, elevators and parking lots and garages that are almost impossible for security forces to adequately patrol.

Although rape and sexual assault are uncommon crimes in Federal buildings — and as a Federal employee you don't have to be constantly worried — you must take sensible precautions. The time to find out what you should do to avoid becoming a victim is **now**.

That's why the men and women of the Federal Protective Service of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) prepared this pamphlet for you. They want you and your coworkers to know how to make your workplace safer and more secure.

The Federal Protective Service, a part of GSA's Public Buildings Service, provides protection for Federal employees and Federal buildings nationwide. Part of our Quality Workspace Program — and our number one priority — is the safety, health, and well-being of Federal employees.

By following the practical suggestions in this pamphlet, and working together with the Federal Protective Service, we all can contribute to our safety and well-being — and to our peace of mind.



TERENCE C. GOLDEN
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U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Crime Prevention Is Everyone's Responsibility

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is the Federal agency that oversees the protection of Federal Government employees in GSA buildings nationwide. The men and women of GSA's Federal Protective Service, Public Buildings Service, want you and your fellow employees to work in a crime-free environment. But we need your help.

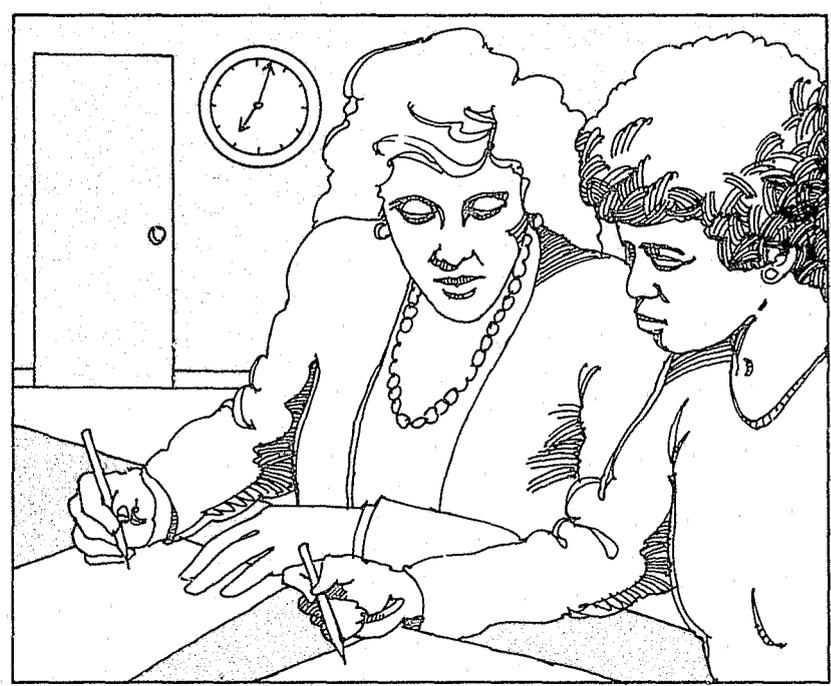
Some Federal employees think that crime prevention in the workplace isn't their problem. They expect Federal Protective Officers, contract guards, or city police to do the job.

But this attitude isn't practical or realistic. Federal installations have too many offices, halls, restrooms, stairwells, and parking lots to patrol and too few officers to do the job. Instead, Federal employees themselves must be the first line of defense.

This applies especially to avoiding rape or sexual assault, the subject of this pamphlet. While rape or sexual assault can happen anywhere, anytime, it's typically directed against women who are alone and without police protection nearby.

To help you learn how to protect yourself, GSA's Federal Protective Service has prepared this pamphlet. It covers situations at the Federal workplace, traveling to and from work, and when out of town on official business. Through a quiz, explanations of the answers, and supplementary information, the pamphlet discusses the nature of the crime and its emotional impact. The pamphlet also offers practical advice on avoiding situations in which you may become a target for rape or sexual assault and outlines some options to consider if you should be attacked. There is a special card on the last page for you to tear out and fill in with local emergency phone numbers to call if you or a co-worker have been assaulted. The detachable card below tells you how to contact the Federal Protective Service for any emergency at your workplace.

Remember, staying alert and knowing what to do *can* be effective. So read this pamphlet carefully and think about what it says. Since GSA's Federal Protective Service National Crime Prevention Program began in 1979, cooperating Federal employees have helped cut crime on Federal property by 35 percent — and kept themselves safer.



What Do You Know About Avoiding Rape and Sexual Assault?

Find out what you may already know about avoiding rape and sexual assault. In the following 10 questions, check the answers that you think are right. For some questions, there may be more than one correct answer — or all the answers might be wrong. Test yourself, then turn to the next page for the answers and some advice on how to avoid rape or sexual assault.

1. What is the best way to leave your car in a public garage, the parking space of a Federal building, or a parking lot?

- a. Locked and in a lighted area.
- b. Unlocked, containing only the ignition key, and near the guard.
- c. Don't use such facilities. They aren't safe.

2. What should you know about using the hallways, stairwells, and restrooms of your building?

- a. Use the stairs, they are generally safer than elevators.
- b. Women's restrooms are safe because only women use them.
- c. Hallways in Federal buildings are patrolled regularly.

3. If you take public transportation to and from work late at night, what precautions should you take?

- a. Sit near the driver on the bus.
- b. Never take an aisle seat.
- c. Arrange an escort from work to the bus or subway stop.

4. How can you protect yourself if you are working late?

- a. Arrange to have others work late the same evening.
- b. Lock the door to your office.
- c. Avoid working late.

5. What should you do if a man on an elevator makes you feel uneasy?

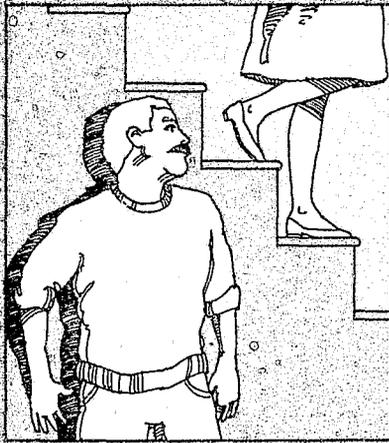
- a. Stand away from him, at the back of the elevator.
- b. Get off the elevator when others get off.
- c. Tell your office mates about the man and go in pairs if you must take an elevator that day or evening.

6. How can you protect yourself when you are driving your car?

- a. Don't worry; you're safe in your own car.
- b. Keep your doors locked and windows rolled up.
- c. Keep your car in good repair.

7. How can you protect yourself by the clothing you wear?

- a. Wear low-heeled or running shoes.
- b. Clothing doesn't matter.
- c. Wear clothing that is not confining.



8. How should you respond if a man assaults you?

- a. Scream and run away.
- b. Attack your assailant.
- c. Submit.

9. If you have to walk alone after dark, how can you protect yourself?

- a. Be cautious, walk near bushes or close to buildings for cover.
- b. Walk with confidence, head up.
- c. Walk briskly, facing traffic.

10. What should you do if you have been sexually assaulted in or near the building where you work?

- a. Go home and pull yourself together; then call the police.
- b. Immediately notify building security or the police.
- c. Go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

**Knowledge
Is Prevention**

Here are some common falsehoods about rape and sexual assault — and “the facts.”

Falsehood: Rape victims generally know their attackers.

Fact: Because rape is the most *underreported* crime, reliable statistics are hard to get. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice, in more than half of reported rapes, the rapist is a stranger to the victim. However, in *nonreported* rapes, the Department estimates that a majority of victims *do* know their attackers. Although there are no separate statistics on rapes or assaults in the workplace, in many incidents, the rapist is someone the victim has seen in her building.

Falsehood: Most rape victims are young and pretty.

Fact: Rape victims are of all ages — as young as babies, as old as octogenarians. Rapists don't care.

Falsehood: Rape happens only in the early hours of the morning.

Fact: Most rapes occur between 6 p.m. and midnight.

Falsehood: Most rapes occur in a victim's home.

Fact: Only about one-fourth of rapes occur in a victim's home. Nearly 40 percent happen on the street or in parking lots, garages, parks, and playgrounds.

Falsehood: Women secretly want to be raped.

Fact: Rape is a violent crime that traumatizes — physically and mentally — and sometimes kills its victims. No one “wants” to be raped.

Falsehood: There's nothing a woman can do about rape.

Fact: Women can do a lot. They can learn when and where rape is most likely to happen and how to take precautions against becoming a victim.

Here's How To Protect Yourself From Rape and Sexual Assault

When using a parking garage,
choose a well-lighted area near
the elevator or exit.

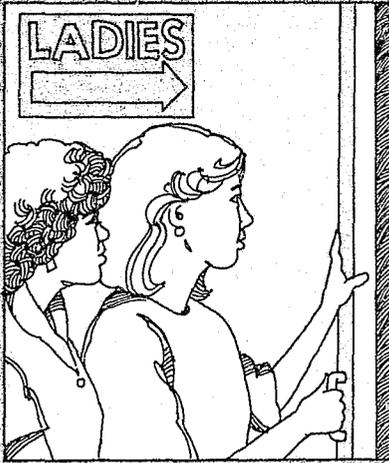
The following section will help you find out what you should know about avoiding rape and sexual assault in the Federal workplace. The questions, in boldface, are repeated for your convenience. The right — and, for some questions, partly right — answers are in italics. For your benefit, explanations also are provided for wrong answers.

1. What is the best way to leave your car in a public garage, the parking space of a Federal building, or a parking lot?

a. Locked and in a lighted area. b. Unlocked, containing only the ignition key, and near the guard. c. Don't use such facilities. They aren't safe.

"a." and "b." are both correct, though "a." is preferred. "c." is partly correct. When leaving your car in a public or Federal parking garage or in a parking lot, choose a well-lighted area near the elevator or other exit and lock your car. If parking rules require you to leave your keys, park the car near the guard/attendant if possible. Leave only the *ignition* key; take your house key, the car's trunk key, and all others with you. Never use identification on your keys — your car





When you use the restroom, go with another woman, and look carefully before you enter.

license number, your name, or your address. If you lose your keys, identification gives potential criminals easy access to your car, home, or office.

Answer "c." is right in a sense, but not practical in most cities. Be aware, though, that multistory car parks and garages can be unsafe. Strangers can easily sneak in and hide, and victims can be surprised far from help and where escape is difficult. If a commercial car park is poorly guarded and badly lit, choose another one — even if you must walk a little farther. If the same conditions exist at your Federal garage or parking lot, alert the building manager in writing or contact the Federal Protective Service Officer whose name and phone number are on your *Emergency Calls Card*.

Here are some other procedures you should follow in parking facilities: As you approach your car, have your keys in your hand. Look under the car before you get near it. Attackers have hidden under cars and grabbed victims by the ankles. Next, even though you left your car locked, check inside to be sure no one is hiding in it. Then get in quickly and lock the doors. If a man is roaming around the garage or parking lot and makes you feel suspicious, drive out of the area fast.

An excellent idea is to team up with a colleague to go to your cars in one or more parking facilities. You can both walk to one car, then drive together to the other.

2. What should you know about using the hallways, stairwells, and restrooms of your building? a. Use the stairs, they are generally safer than elevators. b. Women's restrooms are safe because only women use them. c. Hallways in Federal buildings are patrolled regularly.

None of the answers is right. Stairwells in office buildings can be very dangerous. Assailants can hide in them and, in some buildings, doors to stairwells are set to lock behind you — trapping you on the stairs.

It is not at all unusual for assailants to hide in women's restrooms. When you use the restroom, go with another woman; look carefully in corners before you enter the restroom and in stalls before you use them. If you will be at the office late, try to use the restroom before the close of work hours and then not again until you are home.

Building security does not have the staff to patrol all corridors in a building, so don't go down out-of-the-way halls that are seldom used by others. Also, avoid halls that are poorly lit or have recesses where a potential assailant could hide. Don't make yourself easy prey by being the only person in a remote area of a building. If halls and stairways are poorly lit, notify the building manager.

3. If you commute to and from work by public transportation late at night, what precautions should you take? a. *Sit near the driver on the bus.* b. Never take an aisle seat. c. *Arrange an escort from work to the bus or subway stop.*

"a." and "c." are good advice. When you are riding on the bus after dark, it's a good idea to sit near the driver. He or she is responsible for keeping order on the bus and often has a radio to call the transportation company's headquarters, the police, or both.

If you have to travel after dark, go to the bus or subway with someone from your office or with a friend. Arrange to have someone meet you at the other end so you can be driven or escorted home.

Another hint: Whether it's a bus or subway, never go to sleep. You are vulnerable to attack if you drift off. Protect yourself: Stay alert!

The advice in "b." is wrong. If all seats near the driver are occupied, take an *aisle* seat as close to the driver as you can. That way, if you are bothered or threatened by someone, you can get up and move. Don't put yourself in the position of being trapped in the inside seat.

4. How can you protect yourself if you are working late?

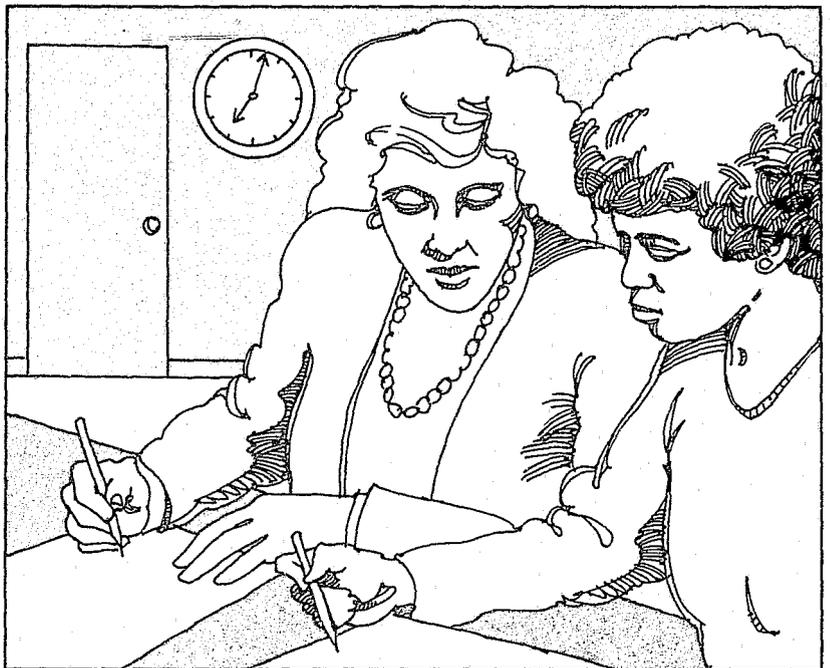
a. Arrange to have others work late the same evening.

b. Lock the door to your office. c. Avoid working late.

All three answers, "a.," "b.," and "c.," are right. In general, if you can, avoid working late. If you routinely work evening or night shifts, you have a different problem. Meet with your supervisor and other officials to be sure your workplace is safe at night and to arrange vans or escorts to garages, parking lots, and public transportation at the end of shifts.

If you work standard daytime hours, however, try to arrange your workload so that you don't have to work late. If you must stay late occasionally, try to arrange for others in your own or nearby offices to

If you must work late, arrange for others to work late, too.



What Is Rape?

Most states define rape as sexual intercourse, achieved or attempted, without the victim's consent and with the use or threat of force. In some states, any sexual conduct carried out against the victim's will is defined as — at least — sexual assault. Rape laws differ from state to state; you may want to find out what the law is where you live.

Rape is not a sex crime, nor is it one of desire or lust. Rapists use violence to control and humiliate victims. Rape can leave a victim emotionally distraught for months or even years because it impairs the woman's dignity and feeling of control over her life.



If you have to travel after dark, go to the bus or subway with someone from your office or with a friend.

work the same evening. Keep the door to your office locked and don't "advertise" that you are in your office alone.

When you're ready to leave, call home to say you're on your way. Go in a group to your parked cars or public transportation. If you live alone, make arrangements ahead of time to call a friend when you leave the office and again when you're safely home.

5. What should you do if a man on an elevator makes you feel uneasy? a. Stand away from him, at the back of the elevator. **b. Get off the elevator when others get off.** c. Tell your office mates about the man and go in pairs if you must take an elevator that day or evening.

"b." is the only right answer. If a fellow passenger makes you nervous, trust your instincts and get out of the situation *fast!* Never put yourself in the position of being the only other person on the elevator. If everyone else gets off the elevator, you get off, too. Catch a different elevator to your floor or recruit an escort. Don't take the stairs. Your potential attacker may be waiting for you.

It's also a good idea to check the elevator before you get on. If you see someone who looks or acts "strange," take another elevator. When you're waiting for an elevator, stand away from the door — that way you can't be pulled or pushed in.

Answer "a." is wrong. Always stand near the control panel when you are on an elevator. If a threatening situation arises, push the alarm



Always stand near the control panel when on an elevator.



When driving alone, keep your car doors locked and your windows rolled up.

button for lots of noise and hit as many floor buttons as you can. Get off as soon as the elevator stops and go into the nearest office to call the FPS officer or guard for help.

"c." is partly right and partly wrong. It's good to warn your office mates, but it's best to call the Federal Protective Service to find and question the person. This will help protect every woman in your building, not just your office mates.

6. How can you protect yourself when you are driving your car? a. Don't worry; you're safe in your own car. **b. Keep your doors locked and windows rolled up.** c. **Keep your car in good repair.**

"b". and "c." are correct. When you're driving alone in your car — especially after dark — keep your doors locked and your windows rolled up. In hot weather, roll up the windows as far as you can. Keep your car in good repair and with plenty of gas in the tank — this will cut down on the chances of a breakdown in an unsafe area.

Answer "a." is wrong. It's too easy to feel safe in familiar places, like your office, your home, or your car. But if you take a few precautions, you'll not only feel safe, you'll *be* safe. Here are some other hints on keeping yourself safe in a car.

Never pick up hitchhikers or other strangers.

If you suspect someone in another car is following you, drive to the nearest public place or police or fire station for help. *Do not drive home — you may be followed.*

Don't stop for stranded motorists. Instead, write down the license number, description of the car, and location; drive to the nearest phone and call the police for assistance.

If your car breaks down, tie a white rag or handkerchief to the antenna or door handle, and then stay in the car with the doors locked

**A Separate
Issue . . .**

Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace

It's against the law for co-workers, supervisors, or other officials to harass you sexually. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as: "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature . . ."

GSA's Federal Protective Service does *not* enforce the guidelines covering sexual harassment in the workplace — that is the ultimate responsibility of the EEOC.

Each Federal agency and department is responsible for issuing a policy statement on discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, age and sex — which includes sexual harassment — and ensuring that all employees are fairly treated. Each agency and department is also responsible for conducting its own internal investigation of discrimination complaints and trying to resolve them. If this is not possible, the complaints may be referred to the EEOC or a case may be filed in U.S. District Court.

Sexual harassment is illegal. If you believe you have been or are being treated in an unfair manner, check with your agency's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office on where and how to report sexual harassment.

and windows rolled up. If someone stops to provide assistance, ask that person to call the police for you.

While it is never a good idea to leave the scene of an accident, rapists have been known to cause minor accidents on purpose to get a woman to stop her car. If you are suspicious about an "accident," don't stop. Drive to a lighted area where there are other people — a gas station or a convenience store, for example — and telephone the police (911 for emergencies in most areas or dial "0" for the operator). You don't have to pay for the call.

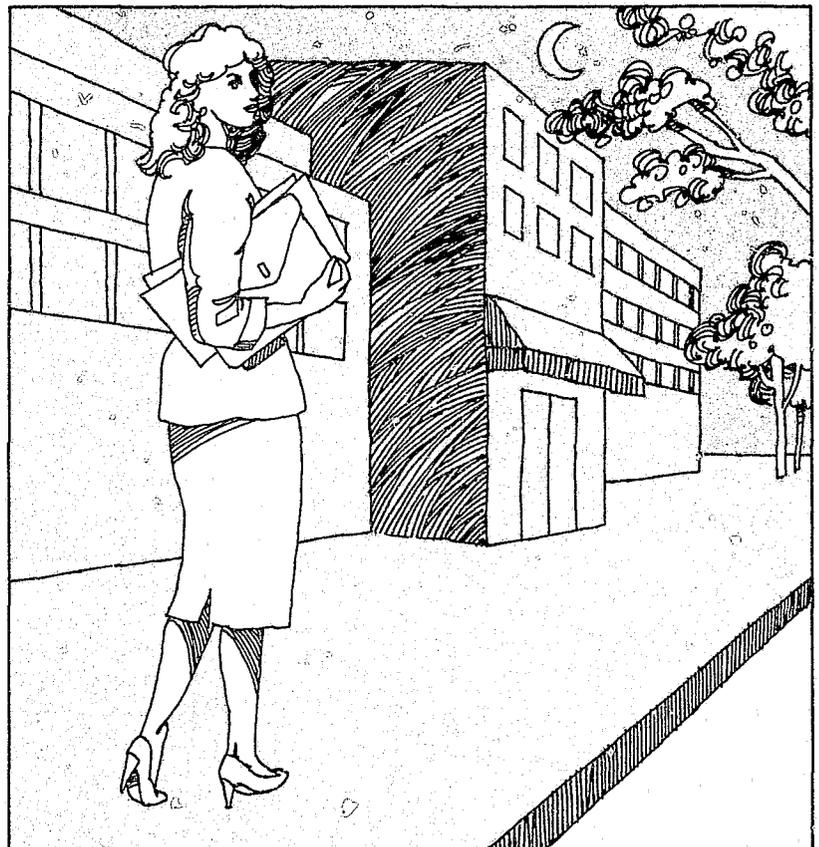
In some cases, rapists have also impersonated police and stopped women drivers for nonexistent "traffic violations." If you are driving late at night and are approached by an unmarked car or a car that looks "official," drive to the nearest exit and stop at a well-lighted area where there are other people. If the officer is legitimate, he or she will understand your concerns. If you still feel uneasy, drive to a store or other populated area.

7. How can you protect yourself by the clothing you wear?

- a. Wear low-heeled or running shoes.** b. Clothing doesn't matter.
c. Wear clothing that is not confining.

"a." and "c." are correct. Your first reaction to danger should be to get away — but you can't do that in high heels. Wear street (or "walking") shoes to and from work and change to dress shoes for the office. Also remember that you can't run in confining clothing, such as narrow or long skirts.

Answer "b." is wrong; clothing *does* matter — but not in the way people used to think. Once it was said that women "invited" rape or assault by the way they dressed. However, studies have shown that rapists aren't even aware of their victims' clothing.



Remember, you can't run in confining clothing such as narrow, long skirts or high heels.

8. How should you respond if a man assaults you? *a. Scream and run away. b. Attack your assailant. c. Submit.*

Depending on the circumstances, either "a.," "b.," or "c." could be correct. It depends on you, on the attacker, and on the whole situation. Nobody can tell you what you can do or what you should do; but there are some things to consider.

Your instinct may be to scream. Do it. It may startle your attacker, who may either loosen his grip or let you go entirely. Run. Kick off your shoes if you have time and you can't run in them. Don't take time to look back; just get away.

If your assailant doesn't let go, you can try to fight back, *but you must be prepared to hurt him. A rapist is a violent man; he will harm you if you don't hurt him first.*

If the rapist has a weapon, you may have only one choice: submit. If you fight back, you may be killed. Your goal is to survive. Most state laws no longer require that you show evidence of fighting back to file a rape charge. *Do not risk your life.*

Most law enforcement officials believe that it is a bad idea for you to carry a weapon — legal or illegal — to use against an assailant. Weapons can too easily be used against you.

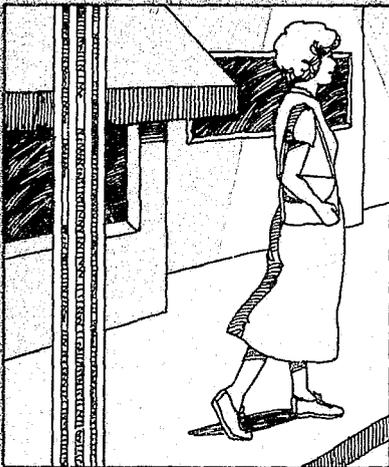
Because anyone can be a victim of sexual assault, you should think about the kinds of defense you would be willing to use. Now is the time to consider your options. There is little time during an attack to think about what you would do.

Remember, sexual assault is a crime of violence — *not* sex. You *must* assume that the rapist is willing to use violence. If you are attacked, your main concern must *always* be your own safety. If you believe you might get hurt by defending yourself or if you are afraid to fight back, don't. Submitting to a rape or sexual assault out of fear for your safety does not mean that you consented. *It is still a rape and still a crime.* Even if you do not have a single cut or bruise, the assault should still be reported to the police. *Victims who do not resist should never feel guilty. It is the attacker who committed the crime.*

Carefully write down a description of the person who assaulted you. **Important things to remember and write down are:** height and weight, race, age, color of hair and haircut, complexion, facial hair (beard, mustache, sideburns), eyeglasses, color of eyes, scars or unusual marks. Also describe clothing, jewelry, any weapon, and — if a vehicle was used — its color, make, and license number. Information on the direction of escape may help law officers find the assailant.

9. If you have to walk alone after dark, how can you protect yourself? *a. Be cautious, walk near bushes or close to buildings for cover. b. Walk with confidence, head up. c. Walk briskly, facing traffic.*

"b." and "c." are correct. Of course, it's best to avoid walking alone after dark; but occasions will arise when you must. Walk with confidence, with your head held high. Demonstrate that you are alert and know where you are going. Rapists, like all criminals, prey upon people they think look vulnerable. Don't scurry along, slouched, looking at the sidewalk or behind you. You'll have "victim" written all over you.



If you have to walk alone after dark, walk on the sidewalk facing traffic and use well-lighted main streets.

Walk on the sidewalk facing traffic. Don't give drivers a chance to sneak up behind you. If someone in a car stops to ask a question, keep walking and stay on the sidewalk so you can't be grabbed.

"a." is wrong. Use well-lighted main streets as much as you can. Stay away from bushes and trees, the shadows of buildings, and dark doorways — these are places where assailants hide. Don't take shortcuts through unsafe areas like parks and alleys. If you think you are being followed, go to a nearby store or gas station.

How To Protect Yourself Against Rape or Sexual Assault While Traveling

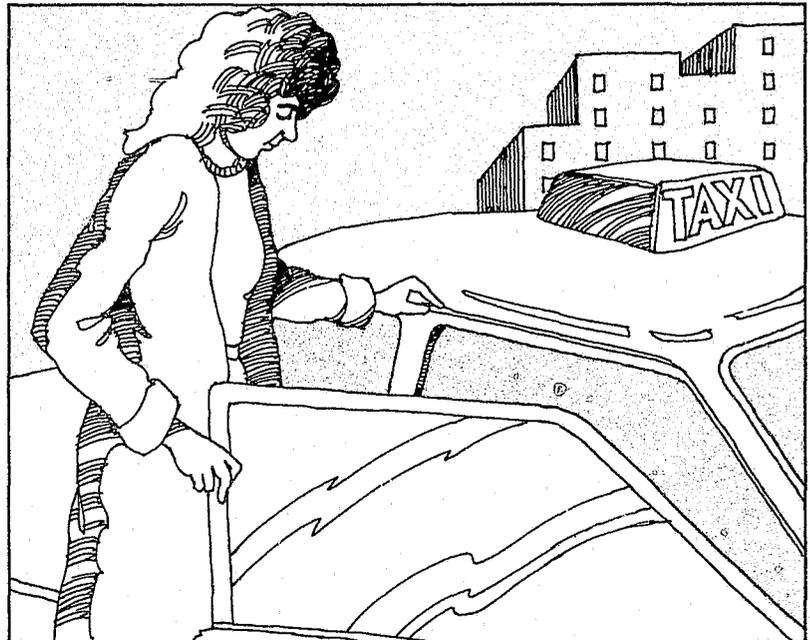


When you are in your hotel room, keep the deadbolt locked and the chain on the door.

When staying in an unfamiliar city, take taxis after dark. Don't walk alone at night.

Many Federal Government employees travel on official business as part of their jobs. When you are staying in an unfamiliar city, don't become a victim. Protect yourself by following these suggestions.

- Find out where the safe and unsafe neighborhoods are located.
- When you can, travel with a trusted colleague.
- Ask if your hotel offers women-only floors.
- Ask if you can be seated with other guests in the hotel dining room or in restaurants to avoid being targeted as a woman traveling alone.
- When you leave your room, always lock the door.
- When you are *in* your room, keep the deadbolt locked and the chain on the door.
- Don't open your door unless you have called room service or you are expecting visitors.
- If someone knocks on your door, verify that your caller is the person you're expecting — *before you open the door*.
- Even if you're expecting someone, if your door has a peephole, look through it before opening the door.
- If you like to jog or work out while you're on travel, ask the hotel/motel to recommend a safe place. *Don't jog in areas that are unsafe.*
- *Take taxis after dark. Don't walk alone at night.* And even during the day — be alert! (Follow the suggestions in the answers to Question 9.)



10. What should you do if you have been sexually assaulted in or near the building where you work? a. Go home and pull yourself together; then call the police. b. *Immediately notify building security or the police.* c. *Go to the nearest hospital emergency room.*

"b." and "c." are both correct. "a." is not what you should do. If you are the victim of an assault, you must get immediate medical attention for yourself. You may have cuts or abrasions, broken bones, or other injuries. You should be examined by a medical professional. *In addition, you should notify authorities without delay so they can look for your assailant.* This will help protect other women from being attacked. As a follow-up, you may wish to contact a rape crisis center or a social services agency for emotional support and legal advice.

If the assault has resulted in a rape, *it is essential that you go to a hospital or doctor.* Do not shower or change your clothing, no matter how "dirty" you feel. Many rape crisis centers have trained volunteers who will accompany you to the hospital, explain the procedures to you, and speak with hospital personnel about what has happened if you feel too embarrassed.

One reason for getting immediate medical attention is that to go to court, the police will need specific evidence taken under careful conditions.

A second and more pressing reason is that you must protect your own health. Medical personnel will discuss possible pregnancy and your options and the testing you must complete to protect yourself against sexually transmitted diseases.

If the rapist is caught, and is to be prosecuted, you will have to agree to appear in court. This can bring the experience back at a time when you have begun to heal emotionally. If you wish, rape crisis center volunteers will accompany you to the trial and provide other support during the process.

If you are the victim of an assault, get immediate medical attention for yourself.

In addition, you should notify the authorities without delay so they can look for your assailant.



How To Help a Co-worker Who Has Been Raped

Take your cue from her. If she wants to talk about her experience, lend a sympathetic ear.



The victim is not the only person affected by rape. Others around her — friends, family, and co-workers — will feel an impact, too. They will be concerned and, perhaps, confused about how to respond to the situation. Here are some ways you can help a co-worker who has been raped. (If you are a victim yourself, these suggestions will apply to you as well.)

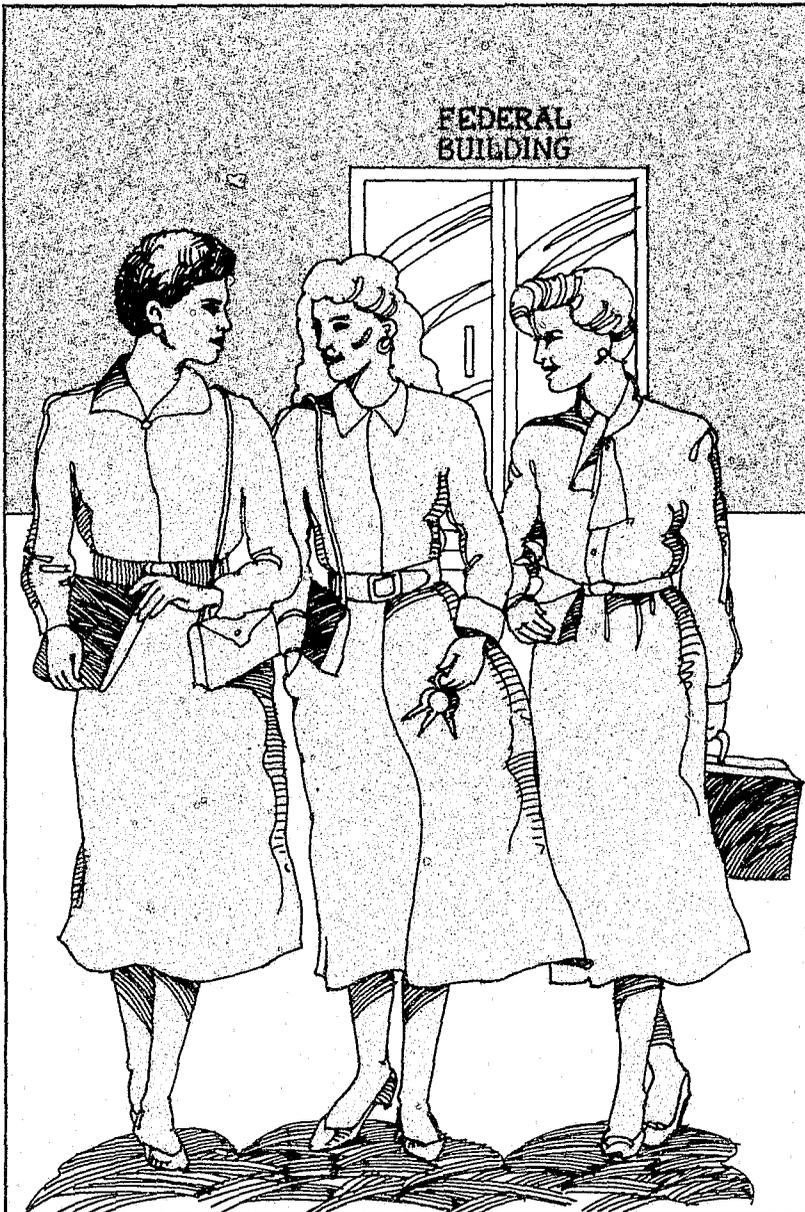
If the rape has just occurred. . .

- ❑ Find a place for the victim to lie down. Keep her warm with a coat, sweater, or blanket to protect her from the consequences of shock. Do not let her change her clothes or wash.
- ❑ Call an ambulance.
- ❑ Call the Federal Protective Service office (or local police) number listed on your Emergency Calls Card.
- ❑ Ask the victim if she would like the assistance of a trained volunteer from the local rape crisis center, then make the call for her. (The number will be on the card labeled "Help: Rape or Sexual Assault" opposite this page.)
- ❑ Offer to call her family, roommates, or friends for her. When you speak with them, be calm and sympathetic. *If she does not want anyone contacted, you must honor her request.*
- ❑ Volunteer to accompany her to the hospital. Then stay with her until family, friends, or the rape crisis center volunteer arrives.

If she's just back at work after being raped. . . .

- ❑ Show her that you care about her well being.
- ❑ Take your cue from her. If she wants to talk about her experience, lend a sympathetic ear. If she wants to keep it to herself, don't pry.
- ❑ Give your support by spending time with her — have dinner, go shopping, take in a show. Offer to be with her — she might be afraid to be alone.
- ❑ Be understanding when she needs time off for medical appointments, police follow-up, and court appearances.
- ❑ Rape victims often feel guilty that they didn't do enough to fend off the attack. Encourage her not to feel guilty.

Other publications available from GSA's Federal Protective Service include *What You Should Know About Preventing Thefts in the Federal Workplace* and *Security Guidelines for Federal Executives*.



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