

CYBER HARRASSMENT - HOW TO FIX THE PROBLEMS

By Liz Steen

Connect reports to the cybercrime team.

Create a direct pathway from cybercrime complaints and non-emergency reports to SPD's cybercrime specialists, so smaller incidents can be connected, tracked and evaluated as patterns rather than isolated events.

Give crime-prevention coordinators a real intake role. Require neighborhood crime-prevention coordinators to accept reports and supporting data, document recurring problems, and intervene early in neighborhood disputes before conduct escalates.

Set standards for the non-emergency line. Establish clear procedures for accepting and documenting cybercrime, cyber-harassment and technology-facilitated abuse calls. A report should not disappear simply because it does not require an immediate police response.

Use the protection-order system earlier.

Ask the prosecutor's office to help route appropriate harassment and stalking cases toward the protection-order framework, rather than requiring victims first to prove the underlying cyber fraud—something that may be nearly impossible without records held by tech companies.

Put small business and property crime into neighborhood safety plans. Expand neighborhood safety plans to include recurring property crime, harassment of business owners and related cyber harassment. Treat the online and physical conduct as one pattern when the evidence supports that connection.

Create an offline cyber-reporting system.

Cybercrime cannot depend entirely on a website or online account. Someone reporting a compromised account may not have a safe account or device from which to report it. Provide telephone and in-person intake, with a case number and actual paperwork.

Build a standardized tech-company records process. Create forms and procedures that allow victims, police, prosecutors and courts to request and preserve relevant account records quickly and consistently. The goal is to get evidence before companies delete it—not spend months discovering which company requires which form.

Use the data to help fund the system.

Aggregate anonymized reporting data to identify patterns, support grants and regulatory enforcement, and explore modest fees tied to appropriate services or regulated entities to help pay for intake and staffing. The reporting system should generate resources instead of becoming another unfunded mandate.