



## **Safety Teams for Rural Organizers**

### What is a safety/security team?

From decades of experience doing small town and rural organizing, we know that working with a group or a team creates safety for every leader involved. Similarly, in moments of heightened danger, intimidation, and threat, a safety team made up of people from your group and/or your community can help assess, document, and respond to threats and risks.

### Why have a safety/security team?

- To build a healthy security culture for your group and your events.
- To reduce the personal risks of organizing in small towns and rural communities.
- To mitigate and respond to the emotional distress of rural organizers.
- To understand the risks of radical organizing in small towns and to minimize the risks to individuals and groups.

### Goals:

- To promote safety/security culture among people organizing for change in small towns and rural communities.
  - To increase awareness of security culture for rural organizers who may feel isolated and alone organizing in small towns and rural communities.
  - To address the safety/security needs of key organizers in their local communities.
  - To reduce and mitigate the impact of both direct and indirect threats against organizers in rural communities.
  - To incorporate safety/security planning into your group's future event planning.
- For information related to event security please see: Security Questions for Event Planning and Creating a Culture of Safety & Security.

### Team Recruitment:

Depending on the size of your group, you may need a smaller safety/security team to support organizers in your community and a larger safety/security team to assist with security for specific events you plan in your community.

Identify members within your group with these general characteristics:

- Emotional maturity and stability
- Strong people skills - can talk to people and de-escalate tense situations
- Keen ability to observe people and situations
- Good judgment, thoughtful, patient, and not impulsive
- Ability to communicate effectively in times of crisis and/or stressful situations
- Understanding that effective security

Team Tasks:

- Assist group leaders and/or targeted individuals in assessing threats, ie: direct threat vs. indirect threats.
- Assist targeted individuals in assessing their specific safety needs relative to a specific threat.
- Assist targeted individuals in conducting a safety assessment of their home, community, travel, mail and computer security as needed.
- Assist local leaders and organizers in reviewing and documenting threats.
- Report the findings of such assessments to both the targeted individuals and the larger group as needed or requested.
- Assist group members as required with obtaining and setting up necessary equipment and supplies to enhance their personal and home security.

Document:

Carefully document all threats toward your group's leaders and organizers. Take screenshots, photos, and write down and date details as necessary. Document if an in-person threat is made, a description of the individual who made the threat and the vehicle they were driving, if there were others in the vehicle, and what they were doing.

Documentation should include:

- Who made the threat?
- Where was the threat made? Was the threat made online, on the phone, or to an individual or at an event?
- How often was the threat repeated or reposted?
- Was the threat made toward the group or a specific individual?
- Is there a history of the individual or group making the threat actually acting upon the threat?
- Was the threat reported to local law enforcement? What was the law enforcement agencies' response to you regarding the threat? Would it be prudent to make reports to additional agencies such as Oregon State Police or the Department of Justice?

## Evaluate & Respond:

Was the threat made as an attempt to disrupt and interfere with your local organizing?

Were your group's plans or activities stopped or altered as a result of the threats?

Would bringing community pressure to bear likely stop or increase the threats? Would it be in the best interest of your group or the individuals involved to make information about the threats made to your group or organizers public? What steps are needed locally on behalf of organizers or groups to respond to the threats and mitigate danger to individuals.