

Report an Incident

International Association of Wildland Fire has partnered with Spot to provide an anonymous way to document harassment or discrimination. Submitting a report to your organization is optional.

SPOT FAQs

About Spot

What is Spot?

Spot is a bot. Talking to Spot is like texting or using a messaging app, but with a machine instead of a friend. Our bot is a program that responds to what you write and can ask meaningful follow-up questions.

Is Spot a person?

No. We tried to make interacting with the bot feel natural and conversational, but Spot is definitely not a person.

Will any person read my Spot conversation?

No. Unless you tell us to send your report to someone, no human will ever read your conversation.

Why a bot?

People are often afraid to report workplace harassment and discrimination and don't want to talk about it with others at their organization. A bot is helpful because:

- It'll never judge or assess you.
- It's available anytime, anywhere, for as long as you need.
- It won't share your conversation with anyone, unless you explicitly tell it to do so.

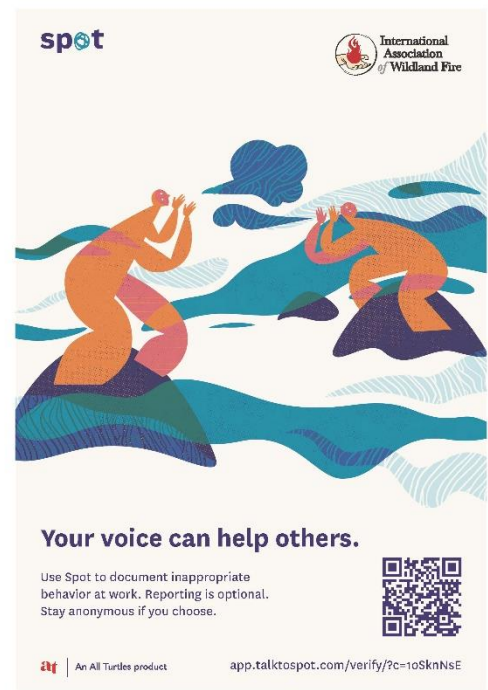
Is Spot free to use?

Yes. Our priority is to give individuals an accessible tool to report harassment and discrimination. Spot is funded by and built out of All Turtles, an AI studio based in San Francisco, Tokyo, and Paris.

Is Spot for me?

Can I use Spot if I'm not sure what I experienced was really harassment or discrimination?

Yes. If what you experienced felt inappropriate, use Spot. For an overview of harassment and discrimination with examples of each, see our handbook on the legal concepts.



The graphic features the 'spot' logo in the top left and the International Association of Wildland Fire logo in the top right. The central illustration shows two stylized human figures in orange and pink, one appearing to be shouting or calling out to the other across a landscape of blue and green waves. Below the illustration, the text reads: 'Your voice can help others. Use Spot to document inappropriate behavior at work. Reporting is optional. Stay anonymous if you choose.' A QR code is positioned to the right of this text. At the bottom, it says 'An All Turtles product' and provides the URL 'app.talktospot.com/verify/?c=10SkN5E'.

Can I use Spot if I witnessed inappropriate behavior?

Yes. You can use Spot if you witnessed someone else being harassed or discriminated against.

When is the best time to use Spot? What if the event happened months or years ago?

Use Spot as soon as you can after the event, to capture as many details as possible.

If the event happened some time ago, you can still report it.

How Spot works

There are 3 main steps to record and report your experience with Spot.

1. **Interview with Spot.** Spot asks a series of questions about what you remember. You can answer or skip any question. The chat takes as little as 10 minutes or as long as you need.
2. **View your private report.** Email yourself a timestamped PDF of your private report and keep it safe. It can be used as high-quality evidence if you need it.
3. **Optional reporting.** Edit and submit the report to your organization. Delete the parts of your interview that you don't want to share. Spot sends reports from our email server, so you can choose to stay anonymous.
Read more about reports.

How do I save my private report?

You can email yourself your private report as a securely signed PDF. We temporarily store your email address to 1) send your PDF and 2) allow you to save your report to edit and submit to your organization later. Your email address won't appear in your Spot documents.

If you're a verified employee whose organization uses Spot, we keep your email address so that your employer can follow up on your report through Spot. We will never reveal your email to your organization.

Can I stop before I've finished creating a report and come back later?

Yes. As long as you keep the browser tab or window open, your information will still be there. If you close the tab or window where you're using Spot, we immediately delete your data to protect your private information. You can also save your report to edit and submit to your organization later.

I'm interested in the technology behind Spot. How does it work?

Spot is a basic artificial intelligence that uses natural language processing to interact with you. The program can identify some words and phrases and accordingly change what it asks you. This analysis is done on our own servers.

Optional reporting

When I submit a report, what does the recipient get?

The recipient gets an email from reporting@talktopot.com (they will not see your email address). The email contains a link to a webpage where they can download your report as a PDF. After downloading the report, the recipient has 30 days to download it again before it's automatically deleted from our servers.

If you're a verified employee whose organization uses Spot, your organization receives the report in their Spot dashboard. We store the report on our servers until your organization decides to delete it.

Why does Spot automatically delete reports?

To keep your data private and safe. We aim to minimize the amount of time your sensitive information is available to a third party.

If you ask Spot to submit a report to your organization, you can see whether the recipient has downloaded it by using the status webpage link saved during your chat with Spot. If the recipient has not yet downloaded it and you no longer want them to have access to it, you can manually delete that version of the report from the status webpage.

If you're a verified employee whose organization uses Spot, you won't be able to delete submitted reports.

You can also email us at hello@talktopot.com with your report ID to request that we delete your data.

How do I know the status of the report I sent?

You'll get a link to a status webpage (keep this link in a safe place). The status page will show when the recipient has downloaded your report. If you change your mind about sending the report to your organization and the recipient has not yet downloaded it, you can manually delete your report on this page.

If you submit a report as a verified employee of an organization that uses Spot, you won't receive a status webpage link because you can be certain that your employer received the report. If your organization doesn't follow up on your report within 10 business days, please email us at hello@talktopot.com with your report ID. We hold organizations accountable for taking action on the reports they receive.

What if the recipient doesn't download my report?

If the recipient doesn't download your report, it will remain unread on the Spot servers. Starting 24 hours after you send the report, you can go to your status webpage and send a reminder to the recipient.

If you submit your report as a verified employee of an organization that uses Spot, you won't have a status webpage because you can be certain that your employer received your report. If your organization doesn't follow up on your report within 10 business

days, please email us at hello@talktospot.com with your report ID. We hold organizations accountable for taking action on the reports they receive.

To edit and resend your report, you'll need to go through the bot interview again. We recommend cutting and pasting from your original report to speed up this process.

Keep all versions of a report for your records. The report created closest to the date of the event will generally be considered the most reliable evidence.

Can I send a report to myself?

Yes. You can email yourself your report.

Remember that if you want to stay anonymous, forwarding to your manager or boss from your email address is riskier than sending the report through Spot (we won't reveal your email when we send it).

Can I return to my Spot report after I close the browser tab or window?

Yes, if you create a report and opt to save it for later. We email you a link to come back to your report and submit it to your organization when you're ready.

How can a recipient trust the report hasn't been tampered with?

Spot reports are PDFs that are securely signed and timestamped. Each also has a unique ID consisting of numbers and letters.

What does 'securely signed and timestamped' mean?

Your report is securely signed by Palace Inc., Spot's legally incorporated entity. This process adds a special mark to the PDF detailing when Spot created the file and prevents it from being modified. Secure signatures protect you in case someone tries to tamper with your report after you create or send it.

A timestamp is simply a record of the time and date when you told Spot what happened. If you edit a response after the interview but before sending your report, Spot records a new timestamp for that piece of information; a timestamp appears above each response.

Anyone who accesses the report with Adobe Reader can verify that it was not altered after the date stated in the PDF.

If I submit a report anonymously through Spot, can I identify myself later?

Yes. From your own email address, send the full original report that you downloaded. Since your report is securely signed and has a unique ID, your organization can see that it's identical to the one they received previously.

What if I'm not ready to submit a report yet?

You can talk to Spot, create a report, and then decide to save the report for later. If you save it for later, you can come back to Spot to edit and submit the report to your organization when you're ready.

Can a report be un-sent?

No. If you've already submitted a report to someone, it cannot be un-sent by us or by you. However, if the recipient has not yet downloaded the report, you can manually delete it on the status webpage. If the recipient has already downloaded your report, you can email us your report ID and request that we delete the data immediately rather than 30 days after the recipient's first download. We cannot delete the recipient's copy of the report after they've downloaded it. If you submit a report as a verified employee of an organization that uses Spot, you will not be able to manually delete your report.

Is my information safe?

How does Spot protect my information?

We understand that what you tell Spot may be very sensitive. We take data protection seriously.

Three things we do to protect your data:

- We delete reports from our servers 30 days after initial download. Once you've downloaded your private report, you can manually delete that document from our servers. If you sent a version of the report to your organization and they have not yet downloaded it, you can manually delete that document on the status webpage. Please note that organizations using Spot can keep reports of verified employees as long as they need them. You will not be able to manually delete those reports.
- We never share your Spot interviews, reports, or other private data with anyone outside of Spot unless you explicitly ask us to or we are legally obligated to. Once you've downloaded your private report, we delete your chat history with Spot.
- We use industry-standard encryption for all communications between your web client and our servers.

What information does Spot keep?

We believe that, when it comes to keeping your data, less is more. Here's what we keep for each type of interaction with Spot.

If you just talk to Spot

- We can see that someone has used Spot, but we don't keep any information that identifies who you are or what you talked to Spot about.

If you download a report for yourself

- We can see that someone has used Spot, but we don't keep any information that identifies who you are or what you talked to Spot about.

If you submit a report through Spot or save a report for later

- We can see that someone has used Spot, but we don't keep any information that identifies who you are.

- We keep the report that you've sent on our servers until it's downloaded by the recipient. If you're a verified employee of an organization using Spot, your report can be kept as long as needed by your organization.
- We permanently store a timestamp showing us when the report was sent and the email address you told us to send it to.
- We keep the recipient's email address so that we (or you) can verify that a report was sent at a specific time to a specific recipient. We will never sell this data or use it to sell services to the email addresses you've given us. We will never reveal your email address to your organization, even if you're a verified employee of an organization using Spot.

Where should I store my private report?

After the interview with Spot, you'll email yourself a PDF of your private report. We recommend that you use a password-protected personal computer or device with an updated operating system.

If anonymity is important to you, don't save any Spot documents on your work computer or other work devices. We also recommend saving copies of your Spot documents to a personal Dropbox or Evernote account or to an external hard drive.

Is everything I tell Spot encrypted?

Spot uses industry-standard encryption to protect data you send to our servers. Once you end the session with Spot, all data is immediately deleted from our servers. Spot will confirm the deletion with you.

If you quit a session with Spot by closing the browser window or tab in which Spot is running, your data gets deleted from our servers.

What kind of encryption do you use?

All communication with talktospot.com is https-encrypted. We don't store any data unless you ask Spot to submit a report or save your report for later. In that case, we keep the Spot report on our secure servers until it's downloaded by the recipient or edited and submitted to your organization by you.

When I submit a report to someone, where is it kept?

Reports are stored encrypted on our servers (AES-256). Once downloaded, the report is kept for 30 days, after which it's automatically deleted. You can also manually delete the version of the report you sent to your organization from the status webpage if the recipient has not yet downloaded it. Please note that reports submitted by verified employees of organizations using Spot cannot be deleted manually.

If you submit a report, it can only be accessed through the link we send to the email address you give us. If you submit a report as a verified employee of an organization using Spot, it can be accessed by all administrators of that organization's Spot account.

Original research at Spot

Why does Spot conduct original research?

We conduct our own research to better understand the complex problem of harassment and discrimination and to improve the reporting experience.

What's the goal of your research?

We hope to encourage a cultural shift. Ultimately we want to enable organizations to identify and prevent harassment and discrimination and to base changes in behavior on a solid foundation of scientific evidence.

The science behind Spot

What evidence is Spot based on?

Spot was designed to ask the same questions as a highly trained memory interviewer. All questions are based on a standard protocol called the Cognitive Interview.

What is the Cognitive Interview?

The Cognitive Interview was developed by scientists to help police reliably extract accounts of important life events. Decades of research show that this technique increases the amount of accurate information and decreases the amount of inaccurate information obtained in an interview.

The Cognitive Interview is currently considered best practice for interviewing people about negative emotional memories.

How does the Cognitive Interview work?

The Cognitive Interview works by first asking you to describe freely what happened, followed by specific questions called 'probes' that ask you about the things you mentioned.

Part of what makes this technique effective is the way in which the questions are asked. All questions are open-ended rather than leading the person to a certain response. It takes substantial knowledge to create a high-quality set of questions.

Does the Cognitive Interview know whether my memories are accurate?

No. The Cognitive Interview cannot tell you whether any particular memory is accurate. However, it does encourage you to recall more information and avoids the common mistakes made by human interviewers.

While it helps you to remember as many details as reliably as possible, it cannot undo any false memories that you might already have.

Is there research on how effective Spot is?

Not yet. Spot is brand-new. We've built Spot on as much scientific evidence as possible, but it's too early to have research on the effectiveness of Spot.

Is Spot the first Cognitive Interview bot?

Yes, as far as we know. This is exciting but also carries with it many unknowns.

It's widely accepted by researchers that a core part of the Cognitive Interview's effectiveness is building a relationship with the interviewer. Bot-to-human rapport for memory interviews has not been fully studied. We think that people may feel more comfortable talking to a bot than a person about workplace harassment and discrimination, but we don't yet know.

Is Spot the first to apply the Cognitive Interview to harassment and discrimination?

Yes, as far as we know. We believe the Cognitive Interview will translate well to workplace harassment and discrimination because it's intended for highly emotional negative life experiences. Like police reports, workplace complaints often carry severe consequences.

What research have you already done?

In January 2018 we submitted a review paper on the issue of workplace harassment and discrimination to an academic journal. Our main findings show that:

- Harassment and discrimination are very common.
- Most incidents are never reported.
- A major reason for staying quiet is that people cannot remain anonymous and fear retaliation as a result.
- How companies respond to complaints has a huge impact on the disclosure, health, and retention of employees.

How can I contribute?

What can I do to support solutions to workplace harassment and discrimination?

There are several ways you can contribute.

- If you've experienced or witnessed harassment or discrimination at work, submit a Spot report to your organization.
- Contact us to volunteer in our research studies.
- Tell the world about Spot and the research we're doing—on social media or anywhere else. We always appreciate your support.

Unsure about whether your experience qualifies as harassment or discrimination? Our handbook explains the legal concepts.

For Teams FAQ

I just received a Spot report. What now?

Spot reports should be treated as a starting point for an investigation, not as definitive proof that something has happened.

Your organization likely has a process for dealing with internal complaints or allegations of harassment and discrimination. Initiate that process upon receiving a Spot report.

If the person who submitted the report provided their name, we recommend sending an acknowledgement of the report to them explaining the next steps your organization will take to deal with the complaint.

If the reporter chose to stay anonymous, you can use Spot to select a set of follow-up questions for them to answer. Spot conducts the follow-up interview and delivers the reporter's responses so they can retain anonymity.

What happens if I ignore a Spot report?

Responding to all allegations of harassment and discrimination is essential to maintaining the trust of your employees.

If it feels like such issues are ignored or dealt with insufficiently, your employees' satisfaction suffers, as does your ability to recruit and retain a qualified and diverse workforce.

Are there legal benefits to using Spot?

Yes. One of the main benefits is that by encouraging your employees to use Spot for problems as they arise, you're more likely to find out about issues early. It allows you to deal with problems internally and try to prevent them from escalating to resignations, legal action, or bad press.

Making Spot part of your HR toolkit or grievance policy shows due diligence in maintaining a healthy workplace. You may receive more complaints, but we think that's a good thing—it likely indicates that your employees feel comfortable enough to report inappropriate behavior when it happens.

Having reliable records of what happened also means that you can address complaints more easily than if faced with vague allegations. Encouraging reporting, and taking those reports seriously, may also provide your organization with extra legal protection. For more on this topic, see our handbook on harassment and discrimination.

Am I legally liable after I receive a Spot report?

If you ignore an allegation of workplace harassment or discrimination, you might be putting your organization at risk. Companies have legal responsibilities to deal with such allegations.

Initiating a fact-finding internal investigation is the appropriate response to receiving a Spot report. The extent of that investigation will depend on the amount of information given in the report.

Can I avoid legal liability by not clicking on the link in the email I received from Spot?

No. Once you've received a complaint of harassment or discrimination, you have a responsibility to investigate.

How do I know that the person who sent the report is who they say they are?

If the person included their own name on the report, you should contact them to acknowledge that you received it. Spot cannot verify any user's identity unless your organization uses Spot.

I just got an anonymous Spot report. How do I know who sent it?

Although we encourage individuals to include their names, we also allow anonymous reporting. We allow anonymity because it's important for you to know what's happening in your organization even if someone feels they cannot reveal their identity.

We don't store any user information. If someone hasn't revealed their name in the report, we cannot access that information for you.

How do I know whether the report actually came from one of my employees?

If the person didn't identify themselves, you may not be able to verify that a report was sent by an employee. However, if you receive a complaint of harassment or discrimination, you should still investigate, even if you're unsure of who the person is.

If your organization uses Spot, we give you the option to follow up on reports with an interview moderated by Spot.

How can I deal with an anonymous report?

When individuals choose not to reveal their identity, Spot informs them that anonymity makes it more difficult for their organization to deal with a complaint. If your organization uses Spot, you can follow up on anonymous reports, thus making it much easier for employees to come forward anonymously.

We recommend that you investigate the claims of anonymous reports and keep records of these investigations, even if they're very limited.

How do I know a report actually came from Spot?

All Spot reports are securely signed PDFs. You can see verification that the report came from Palace Inc., Spot's legally incorporated entity, right in the PDF.

Each Spot report is also assigned a unique report ID, found on the cover page of the report.

We delete reports 30 days after they're downloaded by the recipient. We do keep an ID log of each report sent through us, along with when and to whom it was sent. Thanks to this log, we can verify that a report was generated by us and can confirm when it was sent. If your organization uses Spot, you can keep reports as long as they are needed.

Can I be sure that the timestamps on the document are accurate?

Yes. Timestamps are automatically generated each time a user enters or edits information in their report. The timestamp you see on each part of the report indicates the last time that piece of information was edited by the person who submitted the report.

Why are some of the timestamps on the report not in order?

Timestamps are automatically updated every time a piece of information in a report is changed.

After the bot interview, but before sending the report, individuals may want to correct mistakes or add pieces of information they forgot to mention initially. Those who want to stay anonymous may remove details that could reveal their identity. Spot records a new timestamp for any edited response; the timestamp appears above each response.

Can Spot tell from the way a report is written whether someone is lying?

No. Detecting deception is incredibly difficult. Research consistently shows that although people often believe themselves to be good lie detectors, on average they're no better than chance. There's also currently no computerized system that can reliably identify lies in written accounts.

Your employees need to know that if they tell you about inappropriate behavior, you won't assume they're lying. Treating a report as suspicious is likely to harm your organization's relationship with the person who submitted the report. It's also likely to harm your wider organizational culture.