

PROPERTY SHOWINGS



SECTION 2: SAFETY ON THE JOB

Safety at Property Showings

When meeting a client alone, you can minimize your risk by adopting these safety precautions:

- When you have a new client, ask him/her to stop by your office and complete a Prospect Identification Form (an example of this form on the CD-Rom under "Office Safety Tools"), preferably in the presence of an associate. Get the client's car make and license number. Photocopy their driver's license and retain this information at your office. Legitimate clients do not mind you copying their driver's license. We freely show our license to the clerk at the grocery store when we write a check and we show our ID to rent a movie.
- Call references and verify their employment and current address, and retain this information at your office.
- Check county property records to confirm the ownership of a property before you go to a listing appointment or approach a for-sale-by-owner listing. The more information you have, the easier and faster it is for police to catch a perpetrator if you become a victim.
- Introduce the prospect to someone in your office. A would-be assailant does not like to be noticed or receive exposure, knowing a person could pick him/her out of a police lineup.
- Always let someone know where you are going; leave the name and phone number of the client you are meeting.
- Never list a property as "vacant." This is an open invitation to criminals.
- Be sure to use the lockbox property-key procedure that has been established to improve real estate agent safety. A reliable, secure lockbox system such as those made by Sentrilock (www.sentrilock.com) ensures that keys don't fall into the wrong hands.
- Try and call the office once an hour to let people know where you are.
- Establish a distress code, a secret word or phrase that is not commonly used but can be worked into any conversation for cases where you feel that you are

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in danger. Use this if the person you are with can overhear the conversation, but you don't want to alarm them. The distress code could be something as simple as "Hi, this is Jane. I'm at [address]. Could you e-mail me the red file?" You can make up your own distress code, i.e. DOG FOOD (when you don't have a dog) or I'm going to MAYDAY Lane (and there is no Mayday Lane). The distress code should be used if you are uneasy, but do not feel you are in danger. If you are in immediate danger – stop the car and leave the area, or jump out of the car at the next stop. Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1. See the "Protect Yourself with a Distress Code System" handout for more information.

- Preview the property and don't go into a neighborhood that you perceive as unsafe. Be familiar with the area so you know the location of the nearest police station. Drive there immediately if you feel you are in danger.
- In showing a property, always leave the front door unlocked for a quick exit while you and the client are inside. As you enter each room, stand near the door.
- Prepare a scenario so that you can leave, or encourage someone who makes you uncomfortable to leave. Examples: Your cell phone or beeper went off and you have to call your office, you left some important information in your car, or another agent with buyers is on his way.
- It is better to not display purses while at a property. Lock your purse in the car trunk before you arrive. Carry only non-valuable business items (except for your cell phone), and do not wear expensive jewelry or watches, or appear to be carrying large sums of money.
- Park at the curb in front of the property rather than in the driveway. You will attract much more attention running and screaming to the curb area. It is much easier to escape in your vehicle if you don't have to back out of a driveway. Besides, parked in a driveway, another vehicle could purposefully or accidentally trap you.

(Sources: Louisiana REALTORS® Association; Washington Real Estate Safety Council; City of Albuquerque, NM; Nevada County Board of REALTORS; City of Mesa, AZ)