



# BECOMING A REALTOR ALSO MUST INCLUDE SAFETY TRAINING – ONLINE REAL ESTATE SAFETY TIPS



The internet is a wonderful tool for real estate professionals. A network that used to take hundreds of man hours to create and maintain is instantly available via online property listings and social networks. But even real estate professionals need to be wary of the potential dangers of having a public persona online as a broker, agent or Realtor. These five tips will help keep you and your business safe from harm.

**1 The most important tool for staying safe online is communication with family, friends and co-workers.** The more information you can share about your interactions with the virtual world, the more people can assist if anything were to ever happen to you. Tell them who you're dealing with online, where they can be found and your contact history with them. While you may fear having a potential client snatched from under your nose, it's important that other people know who you're talking to and meeting with.

**2 Keep all personal and business contacts separate.** It may seem wasteful to have separate business and personal phone lines, email addresses and mailing addresses but it protects you against theft. Whether or not you work from an office building, set up a PO Box as a mailing address to put on all online listings. Never list any personal information on a social network; keep it all business related. If anyone tries to find your location that you don't want to talk to, they'll only know what post office you use.

**3 When conducting business with a new client, pay attention to your gut instincts when interacting with them.** Does anything seem off, out of place or shady? They may have enough credit to purchase a house but the last thing you want is to get tangled up with someone that acquired their money through dishonest means or has a criminal record. That could put you and your business at risk. If the client seems like a good prospect and you want to try and retain them for long term business ventures, it might be worth running a background check to protect yourself and your peace of mind.

**4 When setting up a time and place for that first face-to-face meeting, try and keep meeting times during daylight hours.** Arrange to meet at the location and drive separately. Don't say where you've parked your car and be sure to limit or abstain from alcohol consumption to avoid a situation where your date may try to drive you home. If you feel uncomfortable, pressured or otherwise unsure, excuse yourself and leave. If needed, ask an employee, security guard or bouncer (depending on the meeting place) to escort you to your car. It's better to trust your gut than worry about offending someone you hardly know.



**5 When hosting an open house for a listing, be sure to use caution when advertising online.** Thieves looking to make a quick buck could see photos of a fully staged house and decide to clean it out. This is where your personal judgment comes into play. Photos are the biggest seller for an online listing but can shout, "Rob me!" Think about the listing's neighborhood, whether you'll have law enforcement patrolling or tag team with another Realtor to help prevent a mugging. Photos may be asking for more trouble than they're worth. Include an address and time frame; pictures can be sent upon an



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