



REAL ESTATE CRIME IS ON THE RISE! SAFETY TIPS FOR REALTORS.

Helping people find a home is always a great feeling. Making sure you are safe while finding people a home is an even better feeling. Realtors can be the unfortunate victims of theft and other crimes and a few precautions will ensure your safety when out showing properties.



Know who your clients and prospective buyers are. Get their information (name, address, phone number) written down before you agree to take on a house or show them a property. That way, if something does happen, law enforcement and colleagues will know who you were with and how to find them. Have your first meeting be at your office or in a public place to get all paperwork filled-out and get a feel for each other. Get a copy of their driver's license to file with the rest of their information. That way you have a photo and physical description to go along with the logistical information.

Communicate with the people in your office and other trusted colleagues where you're going, who you're going with and when you'll be finished with the appointment. If possible, make sure the clients you're with overhear you talking about your schedule over the phone or see it communicated with office personnel. They'll know you are accounted for and will be expected back at a certain time.



Your cell phone is your best friend in the real estate business. It gets you in touch with clients and keeps you safe from harm in case of an emergency. However, when your phone is buried at the bottom of your purse or tucked away in a pocket of your briefcase, it's difficult to access quickly. Invest in a cell phone holster to have it at hand at all times. If nothing else, keep it in a coat or pants pocket. Better for it to be on your person at all times than possibly out of reach. Have emergency numbers programmed into speed dial so one touch of a button connects you to help.

Use the buddy system. It may seem like something left over from summer camp as a kid but for safety purposes, nothing beats having a second pair of eyes or another person around to deter potential harm. Recruit another realtor you know and

trust to help you out with showing a property or an open house. Call your buddy if you feel uncertain about a prospect or unsafe in a situation. (Be sure to return the favor!)

Dressing professionally is all a part of the job description. Pay attention to details that could send the wrong message: I'm a professional and have a lot of money! I'm a great person to rob! Remove expensive jewelry and flashy watches. Simple is best when choosing your baubles and bling. Footwear is also important to pay attention to, especially for the ladies. Your three inch stilettos may look sharp but they're not practical in case you need to get away from a dangerous situation. Be sure to wear practical footwear that is both professional and comfortable enough to get you to safety in a time of need.

Whenever possible, drive separately from clients when going to look at a property. If you feel at all uncomfortable or if the property is remote or in a dangerous neighborhood, insist on driving separately. Check all around your car before getting in and driving away. When at the property, park on the street or in a front driveway. Avoid back alleyways or otherwise obstructed parking spots. When leaving, check to see that you're not blocked in and can leave quickly. Let your clients drive away first then follow.

When showing the property, let the clients lead. Be familiar with the house and escape routes and exits. When showing the upstairs and basement, keep close to the stairs and don't let a client get between you and a doorway. Encourage them to explore nooks and crannies but don't enter them yourself. If the house is currently occupied, counsel the owner to secure any valuables either in a safe or remove them from the house entirely.



Even with all of these precautions, a situation may still arise where you find yourself suspicious or uncomfortable. The best thing to do is to call your office or a trusted friend and use a safety phrase, something that's been agreed upon before hand to signal that you're in distress. A statement like, "I forgot my red wallet on my desk" or, "I think I'll have to schedule an emergency appointment" will communicate without letting anyone else know that you're alarmed.

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