

REALTOR® Safety Series: Personal Safety in the Field

Real estate is a very personal business. You're not selling people a blender or a car. You are helping your clients navigate their purchase or sale of property, potentially one of the most stressful times in their life. As such, every phone call, every inquiry is a new opportunity to make that personal contact and foster business.

We are coming out of an unprecedented and volatile chapter of real estate history. Among all the well-intentioned buyers and sellers out there, there still remain people looking to take advantage of a real estate professional for no reason other than the fact that they saw your name and phone number on a billboard, a yard sign, or a website. It's an occupational hazard, and you should be prepared always to protect you and yours.

Over the next few weeks we will be highlighting some of the many safety concerns impacting REALTORS® today and heighten our subscribers' awareness. The first is, perhaps, the most important. Money and personal effects can be replaced; *you*, however, cannot.

Crude, Lewd, and Rude

You've heard it probably from a colleague before. Crank callers and lewd suggestions on the other end of the phone line at 2am in the morning often lead to nothing other than lost sleep for the recipient. But this can easily escalate into harassment. If this *does* become the case, keep a log of the times and number of calls and the nature of these calls. Be sure to keep all text messages to forward to law enforcement. They will have other instructions and suggestions when you contact them.

Luring to a Vacant Property or Meeting Alone

Never meet a new client alone. "Stranger danger" doesn't go away after you trade in your short pants. At RMLS™, we have received calls from agents who have corresponded with individuals who become irate and even threatening when the agent refuses to meet the "client" alone. Red flag. A true prospective client will not have a problem following your office's policy of meeting in the office or a public place like a café or restaurant. Also, be wary of people asking overtly personal questions, asking to work specifically with a particular type of person. There have been reports of people requesting to work with only female agents alone, for example.

Robbery During a Showing or Open House

It happens. Usually this happens when it's a slow day and there are no others in the house. If that is the case, give them your wallet. Never confront your assailant. They are unpredictable, and, therefore, very dangerous, if cornered. Usually, they will push you or anything blocking their way to escape, but consider the alternative. Let's not...just give them the wallet.

Other Ideas

Always be aware of your surroundings, and always trust your instincts and intuition.

- Tell people where you are going and when you're expected back.
- Take someone with you.
- Take down your client's license plate number and leave it with someone at the office.
- Never underestimate the power of self-defense training and pepper spray.
- When showing a house, don't let your client come between you and the door.
- Keep your phone on your person and in an accessible

area.

Always limit your vulnerability as much as possible when alone or meeting someone for the first time.

Further Reading

Go to REALTOR.org for more information and tips on keeping safe in a variety of scenarios. Following are articles with more information:

<http://www.realtor.org/topics/realtor-safety/articles-blog-posts>

<http://realtormag.realtor.org/sales-and-marketing/feature/article/2010/09/real-estate-safety-stories-how-i-stay-safe>

<http://rebr.com/realtor-safety-theres-an-app-for-that/>

<http://realtormag.realtor.org/sales-and-marketing/feature/article/2011/09/safety-lessons-saved-my-life>

<http://realtormag.realtor.org/sales-and-marketing/feature/article/2010/09/real-estate-safety-stories-how-i-stay-safe>

http://www.mortgagenewsdaily.com/7262006_Reator_Safety_Tips.aspx

Next time: Scams Specific to Real Estate