

REALTOR® Safety Month: Personal Safety



There is no doubt that the work day of a REALTOR® is not an average day at the office. You've got to manage so many moving parts within your day: juggling clients and paperwork; darting from one location to the next; and staying informed and current with market trends. Above all, you need to stay safe.

While there are infinite scenarios that could go wrong in any line of work, REALTORS® can be especially vulnerable. September is REALTOR® Safety Month and in honor of that, I'll be discussing REALTOR® safety in two blog posts this month. Today, I'll discuss personal safety.

There are a variety of tools and practical ways to enhance the personal safety and awareness of REALTORS®. A good start to being mindful of safety is to be alert and aware.

AWARENESS

When dealing with strangers, there is no guarantee that potential clients are who they say they are, and there is no guarantee that they will be harmless. To be clear, this is in no way meant to advocate a fearful mindset—rather the opposite. Awareness that elements of the unknown always exist is a good motivator to stay alert and be prepared.

In practice, this means:

- Meet strangers at an office or public space—never alone at the property.
- Take your own car.
- Bring someone you know or work with when possible.
- Never walk with your back to the client.
- Be aware of exits at all times.
- Try to show during daylight hours when possible.

- Cut a showing short if the client exhibits suspicious or red flag behaviors.
- Require visitors to provide a photo ID and use a sign-in sheet at open houses.

RMLS™ offers Document #1071, Ten Commandments of Agent Safety, which offers a number of smart practices and suggestions to enhance your safety and awareness.

PREVENTION/PREPAREDNESS

Prevention is greatly aided by preparedness. Does your office have an established safety policy?

In practice, this means:

- Set a showing itinerary and share with your office and a family or friend.
- Use a prospect ID form and share with your office.
- Maintain a current agent ID form within your office.
- Dress for safety: comfortable shoes, avoid wearing expensive accessories, etc.
- Establish coded distress signal for the office ahead of time.
- Establish a reporting protocol.

REGIONAL ISSUES

There are safety issues that ebb and flow across the country and like all other places, the northwest has our own set of recurring safety concerns. The following are a few scenarios that have been reported to RMLS™ over the past year:

A man who calls female REALTORS® and claims he drugged their water bottle during an open house and assaulted the agent shortly thereafter. He insists they would have no knowledge of it and that he is only now calling to “relieve [his] conscience.”

What to do: Hang up. Do not engage in dialogue with this man, and write down his number if it isn't blocked. Report the incident to the brokerage manager, the local authorities via

their non-emergency number, and to RMLS™.

Male “prospective client” calling brokerage offices insisting to work exclusively with female REALTORS®.

What to do: Get his contact information if possible. Report the incident to the brokerage manager, the local authorities via their non-emergency number, and to RMLS™.

Persons showing up to open houses, acting suspicious, trying to get out of the agent’s line of sight and going through cabinets and drawers.

What to do: Call 9-1-1, report the incident to the brokerage manager, and to RMLS™.

SAFETY RESOURCES

Report REALTOR® safety issues to RMLS™. We look for trends and sometimes issue specific alerts on the RMLSweb desktop. To report an incident or safety concern to RMLS™, contact Michelle Gray at (503) 872-8059.

If you’re interested in learning some self defense, the Portland-area chapter of the Women’s Council of REALTORS® is hosting a self-defense class in Lake Oswego on Wednesday, September 14th.

The following are links to articles, videos, and apps from the National Association of REALTORS®:

Field Guide to REALTOR® Safety

REALTOR® Safety Resources

“Safety Policies” article from REALTOR®Mag

Remember, to minimize your vulnerability is to maximize your safety. Part 2 of my safety discussion will highlight electronic safety regarding fraud, scams, email hacking, reporting, and best practices for electronic safety. Look for it later this month!