



Safety Awareness for the Real Estate Professional

Verifying identity information can discourage a would-be assailant.

Know Who You Are Dealing With

When you have new clients or customers...

Meet in the office

Ask the prospect to stop by the office and complete the Client Identification Form before going to the property. This should be openly obtained consistently throughout the organization and preferably in the presence of another associate in your office. Allowing another person to meet the prospect in the office can be a deterrent because would-be assailants do not like to be noticed or receive exposure knowing a person could pick them out in a police line-up.

Always ask questions to pre-qualify the client.

When listing a property, take measures to identify the person you are meeting to be sure he or she is the property owner.

When showing a listing identify who you are working with.

Verify his or her identity

Identify the person you are working with. Call and verify references, or place of employment and verify his or her current address. Information should be retained at your office. Requiring this information might detain or discourage an assailant.

Get the car make and license number

Believe it or not, the client may be driving a stolen car. If the car is stolen, your prospect will be reluctant to give you this information. Requiring this information will assist law enforcement in catching the criminal or locating you if you are abducted.

Photocopy the driver's license

Legitimate clients do not mind your photocopying their driver's license. If showing our license is required to rent a movie, we can expect identification from our clients before showing a home worth thousands of dollars.

Company use of the Client I.D. Form (*example provided*)

You can never be too safe in collecting enough information about the people who are prospective customers. Create a company policy that includes an identification process regarding the identity of clients and customers.

Personal Marketing

Your marketing materials should be polished and professional without compromising safety.

Limit the amount of personal information you provide

Do not give your personal home address on your business cards. Always provide a cell phone or business phone number, not a home number.

Giving too much of the wrong information can make you a target

Concentrate on your professional proficiency rather than personal information in newspapers, resumes and business cards and web sites.

Be careful of the personal information you share verbally as well

"Getting to know your client" does not need to include personal information about your children or where you live. Be guarded with your personal information.

Avoid glamour shots

Criminals actually circle photographs of their would-be victims in newspaper advertisements. The victim was targeted because of his or her appearance in the photograph.

Dress for safety

Look professional, but wear clothes that are comfortable and shoes that you can run in. Don't wear expensive jewelry, as expensive jewelry can make you a target. Save flashy jewelry for formal occasions. Criminals scout real estate representatives and homes for jewelry, prescription drugs and items that are easy to sell. Don't flash cash or wear diamonds when you are in the office or on the road.

Dress for the weather

If your car breaks down or you need to escape dangerous situations on foot, you could find yourself exposed to the weather for an extended period of time. In the winter bring a coat and always keep a blanket in the trunk of your car.

Internet/Website Advertising

This is a perfect way for someone to learn all about you and your business. Use precautions on what information you provide on your web site. There are also securities when selecting your Internet provider and web site host that can allow your personal information to be protected from the web browsers. If you are

Promote your professionalism, not your personal assets, to avoid drawing the wrong kind of attention to yourself in your marketing.

Personal Marketing - cont'd

not familiar with all the Internet issues, take a class or seek the advice of those who are the Internet experts. There are numerous free or low cost programs that you can run on your systems to see who is tracking your web site.

Advertising

When placing ads to sell a property, the words in the advertisement can be your worse enemy. Scripting there will be an open vacant house, or just the fact that with good intentions you describe a property to sell quickly because it is vacant is an immediate attraction to those who are looking for an easy prey.

Be aware of how much you self-promote to the public. Your listing presentation should include accolades regarding designations and further professional education you have pursued. Use caution when promoting personal facts about yourself and your family.

Danger Is Not Always Easy To Identify

- Don't ignore danger signals
- Intuition
- Unexplained fear
- Apprehension
- These are signals that something isn't right

Safety experts agree that it is best to assume that your instincts are right and to take the necessary precautions. Do not be so anxious for a sale that you ignore your own intuition in the heat of the moment. A few things to assist you in situations are:

Know the property

Have knowledge of the property including location of all the exit doors, garage doors and basement exits. Always have a game plan in place to know what to do.

Plan your escape route

Before you show the property, plan an escape route.

Position yourself in an escape mode

When you show a house or other property by yourself, pay close attention to your instincts. Do not lead the way; it is too easy to be cornered or trapped in a room, basement or attic. You can comment on each room from the safety of the door, from where you can flee more easily if you get a bad feeling about the situation.

Car Safety

Always have your keys with you

Park in a well-lit area

Don't allow yourself to get blocked in a driveway; if necessary park on the road

Ask yourself, in an emergency am I going to be able to run to my car and drive away?

Beware of dead end streets

Keep your car in good running condition

Consider using separate cars

Never allow the client to drive you to the location

You spend a lot of time in your car. This, in itself, exposes you to a likelihood of running out of gas, mechanical failure, or an accident. Make sure you have a fully charged cell phone, tools, blanket, flares, first aid kit, and warm clothes in your car.

Listen to your instincts carefully and take the necessary precautions.

Open House/ On-Site Safety

Arrive early to an open house

Familiarize yourself with the property. Survey the exits and establish escape routes from each level. Make sure all the deadbolts are unlocked to facilitate a faster escape. Double check the backyard to make sure you can get past the fence if necessary. Meet the neighbors in the adjacent houses and inform them you will be at the open house next door. They can be your best ally. They will be more alert to unusual sounds and you will have someone to run to if you need assistance.

Avoid attics, basements, and getting trapped in small rooms. Let prospects lead the way in to all rooms.

Remind sellers to put their valuables and prescription drugs in safe secure places. Do not leave your briefcase, purse or laptop sitting on the counter.

Be aware of suspicious behavior and your surroundings.

Always carry your cell phone and keys on you. This can be your best defense.

Place one of your business cards, with the date and time on the back in a cabinet or on the counter. When prospects begin arriving at the house, jot down their car description, license plate number if possible, and a physical description of each person. This will assist you in remembering names as well.

You should have an office policy regarding sign in sheets for all prospects. You could use the prospect identification form (we have provided you with an example form).

Communication

Know in advance whom you are going to call when:

- Your instincts tell you to get help
- You are just a little bit nervous
- You need help at an open house

Communicate frequently with the office, or family. Notify someone when you are at the property or when you are leaving the property. Be sure your client hears you tell someone that you are leaving the property and will be home in ten minutes.

***Every office
should have a
policy regarding
sign-in sheets for
prospects.***

Open House/ On-Site Safety - cont'd

Keep your cell phone on you and charged at all times.

Make sure you tell someone where you are going, with whom you are going, and when you will be back. Whenever possible, make sure the client knows you have shared this information with someone. You are less likely to be attacked if the criminal knows you will be missed and he or she can be identified.

Use the Office Itinerary Form (example is provided) to communicate with office staff. If your client is with you as you leave the office, make a show of sharing this information with someone. This form can assist police in finding you. Victims of crimes can be missing for days before co-workers begin to worry, unless you communicate when to expect you back.

If you work alone, consider telling your buddy or family member or your answering service when to expect you back. Even leave a note on your desk that could help authorities in locating you in an emergency situation.

Use today's technology to your advantage. Cell phones come with cameras. Take a snap shot of your client, knowing you want to be able to remember them personally. This can also be used to identify the criminal. This one step alone can be the greatest tool for the authorities.

Authorities agree that most rapists and thieves are looking for easy targets. Be assertive and leave dangerous situations early. Do not be afraid to stop at a gas station if you feel you are in danger with the clients in your car. Leave the situation. A car can be replaced, a life cannot.

Know your company procedures for distress codes. Alert your office, colleagues, family and friends of the "distress code".

Share your itinerary with someone in the office or with your family - and make sure your prospect knows that you have shared this information.

Commercial/Industrial Sales & Property Management

Property Managers should be extra-diligent on a daily basis due to the nature of their job.

Property management could possibly be one of the most dangerous real estate careers. You are typically showing a vacant property to a prospective customer. Be aware of several things:

Communication plays a vital role in showing vacant property. Know who you are dealing with. Insist that you have information recorded both at the office and with you about the client.

Be sure your cell phone is serviceable in the area in which you are showing the property.

When the property is vacant be aware of the time of day you are showing the property.

Showing a property at dusk, with no electricity on in the space you are showing, is setting yourself up for trouble.

Screen all prospective clients before showing the property. Use your intuition. When uneasy, have someone tag along or do not show the property.

Have policies in place regarding rental collection and disposition of a property.

All of the real estate safety practices are applicable in commercial sales and property management, and are even more relevant since you are usually dealing with vacant locations.

Be sure you review all the safety awareness procedures and implement the best measures to provide protection from assailants.

Office Safety

As a broker for the company, there are certain security measures that should be in place to assist your agents in safety awareness.

Frequently remind your agents of the various methods of communication that can assist them in their day-to-day business.

Have forms in place, and use them for every client. Be sure that clients are not stereotyped and this step is not overlooked.

Listed below are forms we have made available for you to implement in your office:

Personal Identification Form

Know who you are doing business with! Offices across the nation are now asking for photo identification and information from clients BEFORE going to view a property. The form is quick and easy to fill out and asks for name, address, employer, and automobile information. We ask to prequalify them for the loan; we must prequalify them to show property. Not only does this procedure identify the person you are working with, it helps to qualify a prospect and aids police if something does happen to you. This is a simple form and it may be the best preventive safety measure you and your office can take. Legitimate customers are very understanding of why you need this information. There will be little to no resistance to providing identification if they are truly interested in buying or selling a house. If a customer does object, that in itself should raise a red flag.

Agent Identification Form

If there were an accident or an agent did not check in when he or she was scheduled, you or the police would need this information quickly. We recommend placing the Agent Identification Form collectively in a separate folder that anyone can access. This needs to be updated at least once a year. You may want to schedule an annual review of the information along with the time of year that goals and business planning are reviewed. It may seem a trivial thing, but this form can be a valuable tool to all parties involved when something tragic occurs.

Agent Itinerary Form

Brokers play a key role in the safety of their agents - all brokers must express the importance of safety measures.

Office Safety - cont'd

This simple form helps you find an agent when there is a problem at home and gives you a place to look when an agent is missing. Many agents print out an additional “show list” and attach the form to it. Your office will appreciate having this information if they need to contact you.

This is just a short list of forms that can be used to provide a safer environment for your agents. Other things to consider are tracking of clients who attend open houses, or on site tours.

Implement Procedures for your agents regarding:

- The Buddy System
- Distress Codes
- Office Check in Policies
- Entering and Exiting the building when dropping off contracts after office hours
- Billboard Advertising—Are you assisting assailants in providing the name of the top producer in your organization?

Agent Identification Form

Last updated: _____

NAME: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT NUMBERS

CELL: _____ HOME: _____

PAGER: _____ HOME OFFICE: _____

OTHER: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	PHONE(S)
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_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____
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AUTO (list your most frequently-used auto first)

MAKE & MODEL: _____ COLOR: _____

OWNER: _____

LICENSE NUMBER: _____ STATE: _____

2ND AUTO

MAKE & MODEL: _____ COLOR: _____

OWNER: _____

LICENSE NUMBER: _____ STATE: _____

PRIMARY PHYSICIAN: _____ PHONE: _____

SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS/MEDICINE:

Note: Keep a record of your major credit card information in a safe, accessible place in case of an emergency, loss or theft of cards.

Prospect Identification Form

This form is designed for your safety and security, along with that of property owners and our agents. We appreciate your consideration and cooperation. All security information is confidential and will not be sold or used for solicitation purposes.

This information may be subject to verification. Form is to be kept in branch office.

AGENT'S NAME _____ DATE: _____

YOUR NAME(S): _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

HOME & BUSINESS NUMBERS: _____

IN FROM OUT OF TOWN: _____ LOCAL CONTACT PHONE: _____

LOCAL ADDRESS _____

I (WE) CAN BE CONTACTED AT THIS LOCATION UNTIL: _____

EMPLOYER: _____ PHONE: _____

AUTO

MAKE & MODEL: _____ COLOR: _____

OWNER: _____

LICENSE NUMBER: _____ STATE: _____

Photocopy Driver's License or Photo ID(s) and attach to this form.

Agent Itinerary Form

This form is designed for your safety and security. Please leave the completed form with the receptionist, along with your showing itinerary information.

AGENT: _____ DATE: _____

CUSTOMER/CLIENT NAME(S): _____

Personal Identification Form attached

Personal Identification Form already on file

ANTICIPATED TIME OF RETURN TO OFFICE: _____ AM _____ PM

MY CONTACT PHONE WHILE SHOWING PROPERTY: _____

COMMENTS: _____

Fight or Flight?

When faced with danger, trust yourself to stay as calm as possible. Think rationally and evaluate your options. There is no right or wrong way to respond to confrontation, because each is different. The response depends on the circumstances, location of the attack, your personal recourses, the characteristics of the assailant, and the presence of weapons. There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your own judgment to choose the best one:

- No Resistance
- Stalling for Time
- Distraction and then Flight
- Verbal Assertiveness
- Physical Resistance

Make a conscience effort to get an accurate description of your attacker(s). Even the smallest details may give authorities a clue in finding the suspect.

There is no right or wrong way to respond to confrontation... every situation is different.

Additional Resources

Georgia Association of REALTORS® Safety Page on the Web
www.garealtor.com/safety.htm

“Work Smart to Stay Safe”

Online article from Georgia REALTOR® magazine, August 2003

<http://www.garealtor.com/Default.aspx?tabid=132>

National Association of REALTORS® Safety Page on the Web
www.realtor.org/safety.ndf