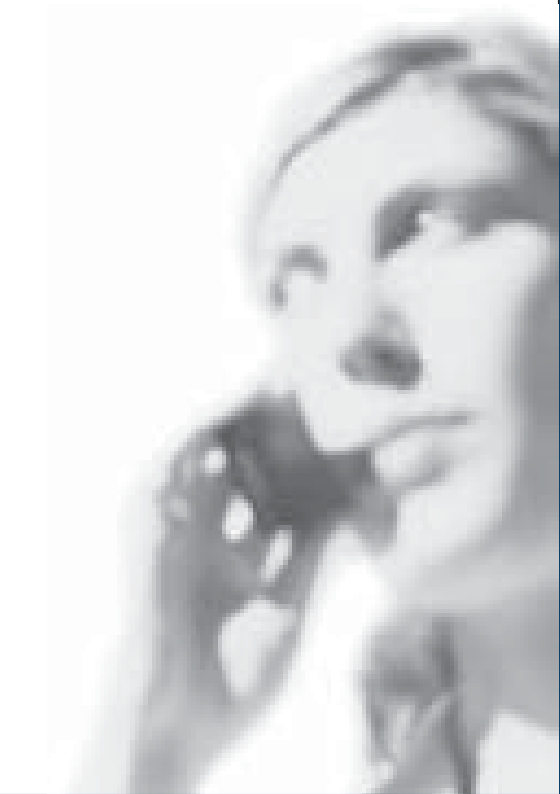




REALTOR Safety

*Helpful tips for
keeping safe
on the job*

*Compiled by
Louisiana REALTORS®*



What you can do about SAFETY

Selling real estate can be a fun and rewarding profession, but it can also be extremely risky due to the large number of strangers that you may have to meet alone. Between 1992 and 2001, 227 real estate practitioners were killed on the job nationwide. Numerous others were assaulted or robbed while out in the field.

By being aware of basic safety guidelines, you can improve your chances of not becoming a victim and keep your daily business activities fun, profitable, and safe. To help you establish and maintain safety in your everyday routine, Louisiana REALTORS® has assembled this booklet of safety tips and office procedures as a member service.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS...

1. Don't host an open house alone; take along a colleague. Never show property alone at night or advertise it as vacant.
2. If you must sit a property that doesn't have a phone, bring along a cell phone. Tell someone at your office you'll call every hour, then do it like clockwork so that person will know right away if something is wrong.
3. Be careful how you dress. Flashy or expensive jewelry might attract the wrong kind of attention.
4. Don't put your home phone number on your business card. Buy a voice pager.
5. Always take your own car for showings. When you leave your car, lock it.
6. Let potential buyers take the lead when exploring a home, with you following behind. Avoid going into the basement or confined areas with a prospect.
7. Always have prospects meet you at your office the first time. Ask them for identification. If they question you about it, say it's company policy.
8. Find out as much as you can about prospects, such as where they work, what they do, and how much they earn. Ask lots of questions and be a good listener.
9. Preview the property if possible so that you are familiar with the area.
10. Don't be greedy. If you're suspicious, it's better to walk away from a listing or a showing.

Source: REALTOR® Magazine

13 WAYS TO STAY AHEAD OF THE BAD GUYS...

- 1.** Carry a cell phone and program it so that the police emergency number is on speed dial.
- 2.** The more exposure you have, the greater your risk. Concentrate on your professional proficiency rather than personal information in newspapers and resumes.
- 3.** Don't get caught off guard at open houses or listing presentations. Prepare a scenario so that you can leave or encourage the person making you uncomfortable to leave. Some ideas: Your beeper went off, and you have to call your office; you left some information in your car you need to get; mention that you're expecting another salesperson with buyers in a few minutes.
- 4.** If you're accosted in a parking lot and forced to drive, don't leave the area. One suggestion: If you're in a crowded area, run your vehicle into another one or into something else, such as a building or a tree. You'll attract attention, and that's the last thing a perpetrator wants. If you're confronted at your car, throw your car key in one direction and run screaming in the opposite direction. For this reason, keep your car key separate from your other keys.
- 5.** Make a copy of the party's driver's license and write down a car license if you can. If possible, get an employer's name and call to confirm employment. It's tempting to start showing homes right away to walk-ins, but it's better if you get information and make an appointment for the following day so that you have time to fact check.
- 6.** Check county property records to confirm the ownership of property before you go to a listing appointment or approach a FSBO. The more information you have, the easier and quicker it is for police to catch a perpetrator if you become a crime victim.
- 7.** Know the sales area. Preview the property. Meet the buyers at your office, where they can be seen by your co-workers. Then travel separately to the property: Don't feel obligated to act as a chauffeur.
- 8.** It's better to walk away from a listing or not show a house if you have an uneasy feeling.
- 9.** Let your office know where you are at all times. Arrange to call your office at a specific time and do it. No excuses.
- 10.** Take someone with you to open houses, listing appointments, and showings.
- 11.** If a buyer wants to see houses in an area you perceive as unsafe, don't go.
- 12.** Carry pepper spray on your key ring and in your car and know how to use it. Take a personal safety course.

13. Exercise caution when being approached by a vehicle with blue lights at night. Call 911 to identify the vehicle, turn on your flashers to acknowledge that you see the police car, and keep moving until you're in a well-lit area. A legitimate law enforcement official will understand your caution.

Source: REALTOR® Magazine

OPEN HOUSE SAFETY...

- 1.** Upon entering a house for the first time, check all rooms and determine several "escape" routes.
- 2.** Make sure all deadbolt locks are unlocked to facilitate a faster escape.
- 3.** Make sure if you were to escape by the back door, that you could escape from the backyard. Frequently, high fences surround yards that have swimming pools or hot tubs.
- 4.** Place one of your business cards, with the date and time on the back, in a kitchen cupboard. Note on it if you were the first to arrive or if clients were waiting.
- 5.** When prospects begin to arrive, jot down their car description, license number and physical description.
- 6.** When showing the house, always walk behind the prospect. Direct them, don't lead them.
- 7.** Watch what the prospects are doing at all times. Do not become preoccupied with viewing the home, and expect the unexpected.
- 8.** Notify someone in your office, your answering service or a friend or relative that you will be calling in every hour on the hour, and that if you don't call, they are to notify the police immediately.
- 9.** Inform a neighbor that you will be showing the house and ask if he would keep an ear open for anything out of the ordinary.
- 10.** Have someone from your office, a relative or friend stay with you.

Source: Washington Real Estate Safety Council

IN YOUR CAR AND ON THE ROAD...

Auto accidents sometimes are no accident at all, but a staged production by criminals where you are unknowingly and innocently made an actor. Before you take to the road, learn to recognize auto accident scams to help prevent you and your family from becoming victims.

Schemes and Scams

Swoop and Squat - Two vehicles work as a team to set up an accident. One vehicle pulls in front of an innocent driver and the other alongside, blocking the victim in. The lead car stops short, causing the victim to rear-end him. The car that pulled up alongside serves as a block and prevents the victim from avoiding a collision.

Drive Down - As an innocent driver tries to merge into traffic, the suspect driver yields, waving on the other driver. As this innocent driver merges, the suspect driver intentionally collides with the victim and denies giving him the right of way.

Start and Stop - Stopped in the same lane of traffic, the suspect's vehicle is positioned directly in front of the victim. The suspect starts to move forward as does the innocent driver. For no reason, the suspect vehicle suddenly stops short, causing the victim to rear-end him.

Sideswiping in a Two-lane Turn - At an intersection that has two left turn lanes, the suspect crosses the center-line, intentionally sideswiping the victim's car. The suspect then alleges that the victim caused the collision by entering his lane.

SEVEN ROAD SAFETY TIPS...

As you become more mobile, it stands to reason that you'll spend more time dodging accidents, thieves, and violent drivers. Protect yourself with these seven tips:

1. Install a hands-free phone kit in your vehicle. If you must use the phone while driving, this kit turns your cell phone into a speakerphone.
2. Carry a first aid kit.
3. Keep roadside breakdown essentials in the trunk: flares, a tire-inflation canister, basic hand tools, spare belts and hoses, water, and a flashlight.
4. Go for the keyless entry system on new-car purchases or have one retrofitted for your older vehicle. It should include a panic button that triggers the car's alarm. Don't hesitate to use it if a suspicious stranger approaches.

5. Don't antagonize potentially dangerous drivers by mimicking their gestures or aggressive driving. Just let it go.
6. Make sure all doors are locked when you're driving, especially at night, and keep the windows and sunroof only partly open.
7. Secure your techno-gadgets and other valuables by keeping them well out of sight.

Source: REALTOR® Magazine

AT THE ATM...

- Try to plan your visits to automatic teller during the day, rather than after dark.
- Choose an ATM location that is in a busy public place. Avoid making withdrawals in isolated areas.
- If at all possible, take along a friend who can watch the surroundings while you are conducting your transactions.
- Pre-plan your transaction carefully, and don't spend too much time at the machine.
- When you make a withdrawal, quickly place the money in your purse or wallet and leave as soon as you finish your transaction.
- Watch out for suspicious-looking people waiting around an ATM – they may not really be customers. If someone offers to let you go ahead of them, decline politely and leave.
- When visiting a drive-through ATM, keep your doors locked and be prepared to drive away quickly. If anyone approaches your car on foot, roll up your window and drive off.
- If you have not finished your transaction, and you are approached by a suspicious character, press the CANCEL button, receive your card and leave quickly.

RECOMMENDED OFFICE PROCEDURES...

REALTORS are often vulnerable to criminals. They may find themselves isolated with “clients,” at the office, in vehicles, or at listed homes. Realtors often publicize addresses or phone numbers that make them too easily accessible. The following safety tips can reduce your vulnerability:

- 1.** Consider advertising without using your photograph, home phone number and/or home address in the newspaper or on business cards. Install caller I.D. on your telephone, which should automatically reject calls from numbers that have been blocked. This will provide you with immediate information about the source of the call.
- 2.** Have a co-worker or friend accompany you. Maintain a clear escape route: stay close to the exits or stay outside. If you’re not feeling comfortable with customers, allow them the opportunity to inspect the house on their own.
- 3.** Write down the customer’s driver’s license or vehicle license plate prior to transporting them or showing the listing. Leave this information in a centrally located file shared by employees.
- 4.** Have a check-out employee board at work, listing your name, destination, customer name, date and expected return time.
- 5.** Keep a charged cell phone with you. Establish a code word to use when you need help but can’t talk.
- 6.** Have your vehicle inspected regularly; keep it maintained; learn how to change a flat tire.
- 7.** Display confidence and strength; don’t wear clothes that restrict your ability to run or protect yourself.
- 8.** Meet weekly or monthly with co-workers and other area brokers to discuss business and safety issues. Share any concerns! If you are dealing with a suspicious customer, take extra precautions to avoid isolation or vulnerability. Discontinue your services for that customer if necessary.
- 9.** Maintain a file on past and present suspicious customers and homes.
- 10.** Report harassing phone calls to your employer and to the police immediately.

It’s important to tell the caller “never call here again,” in order to meet the letter of the law regarding telephonic harassment.

Telephonic harassment occurs when a caller intentionally harasses or annoys another person: by causing the telephone of the other person to ring, such caller having no communicative purpose; or by causing the telephone to ring and causing such other person to answer it, knowing that the caller has been forbidden from so doing by a person exercising lawful authority over the receiving telephone.

II. If you are being harassed or stalked, report the offender to your employer and the police immediately.

Harassment: A person subjects another to alarm by conveying a telephonic or written threat to inflict serious physical injury on that person or to commit a felony involving the person or property of that person or any member of that person's family, which threat reasonably would be expected to cause alarm. A person is criminally liable for harassment if the person knowingly permits any telephone under the person's control to be used in violation of the entire harassment subsection.

Stalking: A person commits the crime of stalking if: The person knowingly alarms or coerces another person or a member of that person's family or household by engaging in REPEATED and UNWANTED contact with the other person.

SOURCES...

- National Association of REALTORS®
- REALTOR® Magazine
- Washington Real Estate Safety Council
- Baton Rouge City Police Department
- Eugene, OR Police Department
- Mesa, AZ Police Department
- Tucson, AZ Police Department
- Allstate Insurance



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