

REALTOR® Safety In or Out of the Office

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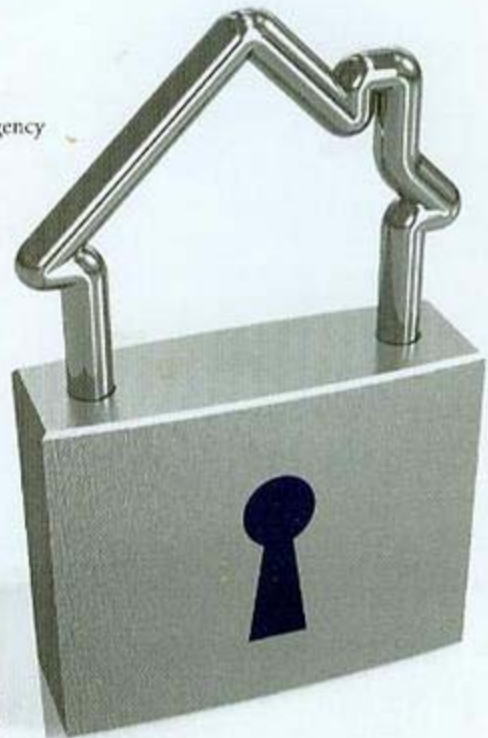
It is always a good time to review safety tips for REALTORS®. The National Association of REALTORS® spotlights REALTOR® Safety Week every year in September. Recently the San Diego Association of REALTORS® was notified by a member that there was unusual activity at open houses.

A couple stopped at several open houses. They would split up and criss-cross back and forth through the home several times on each visit making it very difficult for the REALTOR® holding the open house to keep track of them. The owners discovered items missing from their residence after the open house.

Here are some steps to help our members stay safe while on the job and to help protect the owners' possessions.

Safety at Open Houses

1. Ask the owner to pack up and safely store his/her "prized possessions".
2. Advise the owner to not leave valuable jewelry, watches, money, coin and stamp collections and prescription medicine or other prized items easily available or accessible.
3. If possible, always try to have at least one other person work with you at an open house.
4. Make sure you have your cell phone fully charged and that the signal strength is good prior to the open house. Program emergency numbers on speed dial.
5. When you enter the house, check all rooms and plan "escape" routes. Unlock deadbolts to facilitate a faster escape.
6. If you were to escape through the back door, make sure you could escape from the backyard. Remember that high fences often surround swimming pools and spa tubs, making it more difficult to get away.
7. Place a business card with the date and time written on the back inside a kitchen cabinet. Make a note on it if you were the first at the home or if clients were already waiting to enter.
8. Require all open house attendees to sign in. Ask for full name, address, phone number and e-mail.
9. When you show a house, always walk behind the prospect. Direct them through; don't lead them.
10. Avoid getting trapped in small rooms.
11. Notify your office, a friend or relative that you will be checking in with them every hour on the hour. If you don't call, they need to call you.
12. Advise a neighbor that you will be showing the house and ask him or her to keep aware if anything seems out of the ordinary.
13. When you are ready to leave at the end of the open house, check all the rooms, back and side yards to make sure everyone has left before locking the doors.
14. Always be prepared to defend yourself, if necessary.



It is important in the marketing of the property and ourselves that we keep everything on a professional level. Here are some guidelines for your protection:

Safe Marketing

1. All your marketing materials should be very professional.
2. To avoid trouble, personal photos should not be enticing. Minimal jewelry and conservative dress are always the best. Don't set yourself up as a target.
3. Professional proficiency, not personal information, should be provided on business cards, all marketing materials, and any other media used in promoting yourself.
4. Limit the amount of personal information you share. Don't use your full name. Use your office address rather than your home address—or no address.
5. Make phone numbers hard to trace. Consider a toll-free number, as personal cell phone or home phone numbers can often be traced through some Web sites. Toll-free numbers cannot be traced and can be forwarded automatically to any number. You can always block caller ID by dialing *67 before dialing a number. If you already have caller ID permanently blocked, you can always unblock for a given call by dialing *82.
6. Limit the amount of personal information you give verbally. Get to know the client before you provide family information, where you live, and other personal information.
7. My professional policy is to not advertise that a property is "vacant." Once you have determined that you are really talking to a licensed agent, you can always convey that information.

This article is not intended to scare you or keep you from doing business. It is intended to keep both you and your clients safe, so that you are still in real estate for many years to come. Stay safe! ■