

Personal Safety for Realtors



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- In 1995, Realtor Maria Garcia was showing a house in Brentwood, NY. Prospect Donny Bates approached about the possible listing of his house. Instead of meeting him at her office, she goes to a strange house with him. Once inside the house, Donny murdered her. Donny Bates was a paroled convict with a history of mental illness.

- July, 2006, Real Estate Agent Sarah Anne Walker's body was found inside the kitchen of a model home by a couple looking to buy a house. The home was located in a suburb of McKinney, Texas. Sarah had been stabbed 27 times. A composite sketch was shown by the McKinney Police Department and her killer was featured on "America's Most Wanted". On September 5th, tips received led to the arrest of Kosoul Chanthakoummane.

Statistics

- According to a report published by the Kentucky Real Estate Commission, between 1982 and 2000, more than 200 real estate agents have been killed on the job.

(Dallas Morning News, July 13, 2006)

Potential Clients

- Meet all potential first time clients at your office
- Record personal information about them
 - Photocopy Driver's License- Is it them on the license?
 - Name
 - Address-verify though "Mapquest" or other source
 - Telephone contact numbers
 - Vehicle information to include make, model, color, and license plate number



- Ask them personal questions - "Did you grow up around here?"
- Do not tell them personal information about yourself.
- Introduce them to someone else in the office. Most suspects don't like all the attention. If showing, tell the co-worker where you are going and when you will return.
- If using a satellite office, fax clients information to the main office.

Prior to Showing a Property

- Make sure someone knows the location of the property you are showing, i.e., your office, spouse, significant other, family, co-worker
- Determine a distress code for emergencies in the event you don't want to alert the person-
"Red File", "480-391-1200", "602-391-4357",
"Mayday Lane"
- Make sure your office has all your vehicle information

- Know the area surrounding all your properties-Is this generally a safe neighborhood?



- Know access roads into the neighborhood- this will help you avoid dead-ends.
- What is the location of the nearest police department?
- Does your cell phone work from the property or area you are showing.
- Drive your own vehicle to showings.

Arriving at the Property

- Park your vehicle in an area that will give you the best visibility and lighting.
- Park your vehicle on the street, not in the driveway where you can be blocked in.
- Park your vehicle so it faces the way out of the neighborhood.
- Place your purse or other valuables in the trunk of your vehicle prior to arriving.



- Are there suspicious people in the area or questionable activity in the area? Trust your gut feeling, normally it is right.
- Is this an area with heavy traffic or is it isolated? Could someone hear you if you needed help?
- Did you notice any vehicle following you to the property?
- Make sure your vehicle has a full tank of gas.



Getting the Home Ready to Show

- Arrive early and turn on all interior lights.
- Open all curtains.
- Unlock all doors including the exterior gates, this would allow you to escape out the backyard if necessary.
- Check and see if the telephone has a dial tone. Could you use it if necessary?
- Make sure the homeowner removed all valuables, weapons or pieces of information that could be used for I.D. Theft.

- Notify the neighbors that you will be there and the times of Open House. (If having an Open House .)
- Leave a business card with the time and date you arrived.



Showing the Property

- Always bring someone with you if possible, i.e. mortgage representative, co-worker, spouse. There is strength in numbers.
- Keep your car keys and cell phone on your person. Use a belt clip if necessary.
- Do not wear expensive jewelry or watches. This could make you a target of a robbery.
- Would the clothes and shoes you are wearing allow you to escape and run if necessary. Dress professionally but also for the weather.

- If carrying a personal protection item, do you know how to use it and is it ready to use.
- Verify a prospective buyers information at an Open House with a Drivers License and call it in to the office or voicemail if no one can be reached.
- Leave the front door open while the prospective buyer is inside.

- Never put your back to the prospective buyer. Let them walk in front of you and stay in the doorway as they go into the rooms.
- If they are going to isolated areas in the house like a basement, let them go on their own.
- Have your office, spouse, or friend call and check in on you every hour.



Closing the Property

- Have a person show up to help you close if possible.
- If the house is a two story, start from the top and work your way to the bottom. Work back to front.
- Check all doors and windows, some burglars viewed a house earlier in the day unlocking a window and came back in the evening to remove items.



Dangerous Situations

- The GOAL is always to escape or get away!
- Try and remove yourself from the home or area and call 9-1-1.
- There is no right way to respond to any given situation. Things like location, clothing, size of the attacker, number of attackers, personal protection equipment all play into the escape.



- You must rely on your training and judgment to choose the best option.
 - No resistance- robbery vs. sexual assault
 - Stalling for time- when the attackers guard is down, escape.
 - Distraction and then flight
 - Verbal assertiveness- Yell at the attacker, "Stay Back". Many attackers stated they are less likely to continue with someone who will fight or challenge them.
 - Physical resistance- last resort and get away at the first opportunity. Are you physically fit and how is your stamina?

(Real Estate Safety Council and New York State Association of REALTORS@)

General Safety for Realtors

- Marketing materials - Do not place your picture or first name on your business card or other items. Use your first initial, i.e., Jennifer Thomas as J. Thomas or J.C. Thomas.
- Know how to use your personal defense system like pepper spray. Have you taken self-defense classes and do you practice?
- Trust your gut feeling!

