



Showing vacant properties, meeting strangers, and holding open houses can be scary, especially when you work alone. Every real estate agent needs to learn how to keep safe against unlikely, but possible, dangers.

Meeting New Clients

Let's face it, new clients are what agents dream of. They can lead to a new listing or home sale.

But there's potential danger attached to inviting unknown people into your car or showing them a vacant house. The man accused of kidnapping and killing Arkansas real estate agent [Beverly Carter](#) said he targeted her because she was "a woman that worked alone."

Most strangers are perfectly nice people. Still, you can never be too cautious, so here are some ways to stay safe when you're meeting someone for the first time.

- Consider meeting the person at a public place, such as Starbucks, for the first time. Most criminals don't want to be seen in public.

- If possible, don't work alone; ask an associate to attend that first meeting and accompany you to the showing. If that's not possible, tell your spouse, friend, or colleague where you're going, with whom, and when you expect to return.
- Google the client in advance. Most people have some online presence — Facebook or LinkedIn profiles — that will give you advance information. Often, you can also check their company's website to see if the client really is who they say.
- When possible, meet new clients during daylight hours. If you must meet the client at night, arrive early and turn on all of the lights.
- Take your own car to a showing and ask a new client to follow you.

Parking Precautions

When you show a house, start thinking about possible dangers even as you choose a parking spot and walk to the home.

- Park in a well-lit area on the street — not in a driveway, where you can be blocked in.
- Look around for possible hiding spots along the driveway or street.
- Notice if anyone is loitering on the street.
- If you get an uneasy feeling about anyone you see around the property reschedule the showing.

Showing a House

This is when you want to be extra cautious, especially if the house is vacant or a foreclosure. Follow these tips:

- Never wear expensive jewelry or carry an expensive bag to a showing. Either lock your bag in your car trunk and just carry your cellphone, or clean out your bag so you only have your cellphone and wallet (without credit cards). That will make it easier to grab your cellphone in an emergency.
- Become familiar with the house before a showing, especially its exit points and escape routes in case of an emergency.
- Ask homeowners to secure jewelry, prescription drugs, keys, bank statements, and any other valuables or items that might make it easy for a crook to steal their identity.
- If the house is vacant, look for signs that someone may have already entered the house, like an unlocked door, open or broken window. If you see signs of entry, stay outside, and call the police.

- Always bring up the rear and let the client walk in front of you into the house. Throughout the viewing, walk behind the client, using gestures and commands to guide them through the house.
- Don't enter rooms with no exit, like attics, basements, and bathrooms. Just point out the area, and invite the buyers to inspect the rooms themselves.
- Attend a self-defense class. Then, if the worst happens, you'll have the skills to protect yourself. Many health clubs and community centers hold classes that could help you fend off an attacker. Of course, flight is always better than fight. If you can run, do it.
- If you pack Mace, pepper spray, or another weapon, make sure you know how to — and are willing to — use it.
- Make sure your cell phone is fully charged, and keep it at hand. Pre-program emergency numbers, like 9-1-1, so you can press one number to get help.

Open House Safety

To minimize possible dangers, try these tips:

- Don't work alone, if possible. Ask an assistant, another agent, or mortgage professional to assist during an open house.
- Turn on all lights and open curtains, which shines light on your open house.
- Invite neighbors, friends, family to attend the open house. A packed house is a harder target than an empty house.
- Ask all visitors to sign in so you have their names, addresses, telephone numbers, and emails on file.
- Beware of large groups attending the end of an open house. Sometimes, crooks will come *en masse*, and have one member distract the Realtor while the others ransack the house.
- If you see someone slip something into his pocket, leave the house, and call the police. Don't confront the thief.

Leaving A House In A Rush

If you sense something is wrong get out of the house (sometimes your gut senses danger before your brain). Make up an excuse and leave. For example, tell your client, "I left an important folder in the car," or "I think I left my lights on." Then leave.

Always wear comfortable clothes during a showing — no stilettos — so you can move freely and quickly if you need to leave in a hurry.

Also, create a “distress code word” and rescue plan with a emergency partner. If you get an “uh-oh” feeling, call your distress code partner and work your code word “cumquat” — or whatever your code is — into the conversation, then immediately leave.

Conclusion

Success Brokerage cares about your safety. If at any time you sense you’re in physical danger DO NOT CALL our office phone number (we may not be available to answer). Instead, **leave the premises immediately, call 9-1-1, drive to a safe location, and wait for authorities to arrive.**

Make safety your #1 priority. Be alert. Be vigilant. Be smart. Leave the location immediately & Call 9-1-1 when you suspect danger.

