

## Open Houses and Showings

### REALTOR SAFETY DOs and DON'Ts:

This list is by no means all inclusive. Follow your Brokers protocols. Use your head, be safe. If there is something you feel I should add, call me.

Stop thinking you have control. Look at the person's behavior. If it is crazy, then call it for what it is. Listen to your gut. Don't try to rationalize other people's behavior.

DO always inform your office of where you will be, who you will be with and when you will next be in touch. Make sure the person you are meeting knows that you've given your office this information. One simple and easy statement you can get in the habit of making EVERYTIME you meet a client. As you walk up to him you are hanging up your phone and you say. "Hi Jim, are you ready? We have the next few hours to look at those houses. My office knows who I'm with and what houses we are looking at so if anyone needs to get a hold of me they can." Get in the habit of saying this to every client even if it is two 70 year old women. This will immediately put a kibosh on a rapists plan because he knows others know he is there. If he wants to change the itinerary tell him you can't and you can schedule the new homes he wants to see for another time. I would also say that your radar should start glowing at this point as well.

DO ask the person to stand back off the stoop or porch while you open the lock box and unlock the door.

DO allow the client to proceed ahead of you while showing the property. Make sure you have previewed the property and know all of the accessible exits. Leave the doors unlocked for easy exit. Carry your cellular telephone with you at all times.

DO establish a method of being able to relate an emergency situation to the office or a contact person. Establishing a "distress" code word or having a "panic button" in your possession to use, if needed, will give you alternate ways of alerting the office of your situation. One office I know of asks for the red file to be pulled.

DON'T hold an open house alone, if at all possible. Working with a partner allows you the luxury of having someone available to call or go to for assistance, if needed and someone to help monitor how many people are in the house. If you must do an open house alone, stay near the door and let the prospect look through the house alone. Keep all valuables in the home -- jewelry, money, guns, etc. - locked away. Oh and if you see a big block of wood full of long sharp knives on the counter, hide it somewhere as well.

DON'T assume everyone has left the premises at the end of an open house. Check all of the rooms and the backyard prior to locking all of the doors. Be prepared to defend yourself, if necessary.

DON'T show a property alone at night, especially if it is vacant.

DON'T wear heels. How fast can you run in heels?

Any behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable should not be ignored. Your safety, or even your life, may depend on you listening to your instincts!

## Danger Signals

- 1) New client refuses to meet at the office first. Always meet a new client at your office, never at a property. Make a copy of their driver's license and have them fill out an information form.
- 2) Suspicious Behavior. If you have any suspicions or uneasiness about a client, DO NOT go to the showing alone, no matter what time of day. Ask another person to accompany you. If you are at an open house and you feel that you are in danger, leave the home and seek assistance.
- 3) Client wants you to ride with him/her to property. Always drive your own vehicle to the property. Keep your car locked while driving to the property and after you park it. If your client will not ride with you, make sure that the completed information form contains the client's vehicle information. Once at the property DO NOT park your vehicle where it can be blocked.
- 4) The buyer wants you to lead the way through the home. Always follow the prospect through the home and never let them get behind you. Your attention should be focused on the client, not on the house.
- 5) If a prospect requests to see only vacant property or asks if you are coming alone...these are red flags. Beware.
- 6) Beware of individuals that walk up to you on the street and ask to see the property you're locking up.
- 7) If a guy comes back after looking at the other rooms and says, Come here I have something to show you, or can you come look at something and let me know what it is or is it included with the house..... your radar should light up. You could then either just ask him to explain it to you and move one with the discussion or you could take the cell phone in your hand and immediately call your husband, your boyfriend, your sister, your mom, your child, your office. Somewhere you know someone will answer. You should have these numbers on speed dial or voice dial. Start talking and saying hi, yes I'm here with joe smith we are looking at the house at xyz, let him hear that, do all this as you are walking out the door. Do not stop talking to this person until you are in your locked car driving away. Or you could call the listing office and do the same thing. Say who you are with and where you are and ask if the item is included. Either way he now knows someone else knows who he is.
- 8) In my research I have read where police have also noted an increase in crimes where a woman sets up the victim, even for sexual assault. Women agents tend to be much more trusting of another female and let down their guard. Until you really know a customer, remain vigilant regardless of the gender, appearance, dress, or charm. It could save your life.

Carry pepper spray or mace. If you do decide to carry these things you had better check with the authorities about; Can you use it, how do you use it, when does a level of threat allow it to be appropriate to use it. Most of them expire after about 18 months. The pepper spray is still good but the propellant isn't. Set up an old broom against a tree and practice spraying it at it. Just make sure to stand up wind.