

12 tips for Real-Estate Agents Safety by Robert Siciliano www.RealtySecurity.com ©

We have all heard about the real estate agent who has become a crime statistic. Most of you figure it won't happen to you. You're right: chances are it won't. However Real Estate is considered by security experts and law enforcement to be a high-risk profession. Agents are mobile, usually work alone, frequently interact with strangers, and visit unoccupied properties.

1. **Be suspect of everyone.** There isn't any benefit in being paranoid; however, being a little guarded can keep you from getting into a vulnerable situation. Don't just be wary of a man showing up unaccompanied. Expect them to show up in a nice car, well dressed, maybe with a wife and kids tagging along. They might have a business card saying they are a doctor or a lawyer. Don't let your guard down. It might not be till the second or third meeting that they decide to make their move. They like to gain your trust so you feel comfortable carrying cash and jewelry, and then they decide it's safe to move in.
2. **ID and pre-qualify at your first meeting.** Whether you are at your office or meeting at a property, get some form of identification. Also, it is to your benefit that a potential client buying a home is pre-qualified. Someone who is pre-qualified by a lender and meets you at the office is less likely to be a predator. Open a file with all their identification, including information such as a license plate and employer contact information. All auto dealers require ID.
3. **Stay in communication with the office.** Before showing a property, make it known to your co-workers, a spouse or a friend where you are going and when you will be back. Have them call you at a designated time to check on you. Have them set an alarm on their phone as a reminder. A system where you call in has its advantages too. Have a designated in-out file. Use a clip board, cork board, email or voicemail system that everyone has access to. Use various smartphone GPS apps.
4. **Have a plan for safe open houses.** Take a friend, and bring a cell phone. Spend a few minutes considering all the vulnerable points within the home and how you would escape if necessary. When someone walks in, say, "I'd be happy to show you the benefits of this home! In a few minutes my partner Rocco will be along to assist me." When a couple shows, require them to stay together. Often, they split up, and while one has your attention, the other raids jewelry boxes and medicine cabinets for narcotics. In high crime areas, consider hiring an off-duty police officer to watch the property during a showing. Remove knives from counters. Have a discussion.
5. **Use predetermined code words to alert your office of distress.** Utilize green, yellow, and red, a traffic light, for levels of distress. For example, say to your caller: "it's in the green folder", letting your caller know you are fine. Or "it's in the yellow folder", alerting your caller that the situation is shaky and you might need assistance. Use an acronym for help such as Have Emily Leave the Papers at 35 Cherry Street.

6. **Conduct safe personal marketing.** To a stalker, your photo on a sign or in print is a personal ad. He determines if you have the 'look' he is seeking. Keep photos professional opposed to overly "attractive".
7. **Separate biz from personal.** Home phone numbers and addresses give a predator everything he needs to stalk his prey. Use P.O. Boxes and voicemail systems. Keep your personal phone number unlisted.
8. **Implement a buddy system.** Whenever possible, bring along a co-worker. There is strength in numbers. Predators thrive on isolation. By paring up, you reduce the chances of being attacked.
9. **Dress for safety and success.** Don't wear expensive jewelry. A \$3-5 thousand-dollar diamond buys a lot of drugs. Dress professionally instead of provocatively. Scarves and loose fitting 'flowy' styles of dress can give attackers something to grab onto. Wear shoes you can run and kick in and won't hinder fighting back.
10. **Don't take predators for a ride.** Driving your client to a showing is a great time to determine your client's needs and move along the sale. Don't allow the client to ride in your car if you don't know who they are. Properly identify them. Make sure this is a client, and not a predator. Make sure you have taken the necessary precautions ahead of time before you are put in an isolated situation. If they make you feel uneasy, let them follow you and bring along a buddy. If they do get in your car and make attempts to control you, determine your options.
11. **Pay attention to your intuition.** Trust your gut, and don't discount any troubling feelings you might have about your new client. If anything seems wrong, then it IS wrong. Cancel if necessary. When the hair on the back of your neck stands on end, your sixth sense is signaling you, so pay attention. This feeling is a survival mechanism and you should use it.
12. **Know how to defend yourself.** You are worth fighting for. We don't think about hurting others because we have been conditioned not to. However there might be a time when it is necessary to defend yourself. Go for the eyes, throat, groin and the instep of the foot. Fighting from the ground is an advantage that few people realize they have. Kicking the knees and groin is very effective from the ground. Scream, gouge, bite, and fight with whatever you have. Have pepper-spray in your hand or a coat pocket. Have a ball point pen ready to jab. In previous studies, 80 percent of women who fought back in an attack situation have gotten away. You have more power than you think.