



Real Estate Safety Matters: Safe Business = Smart Business

Safety Checklists



Office Safety

Does your office feel like your home away from home? How could such a familiar environment present risks? Do you:

- Work alone late in the evening, early in the morning, on weekends or on holidays?
- Meet unknown prospects there when no one else is around?
- Carry large sums of cash to the bank on your own?

Use these precautions to protect your office premises, business and personal property, and the well-being of your colleagues.⁶

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Get to know workers in other nearby businesses and be aware of their schedules<input type="checkbox"/> Lock doors other than the main entrance and keep a clear exit route from the reception desk to the door<input type="checkbox"/> Keep windows unobstructed so that passersby can see in<input type="checkbox"/> In large companies, require visitors to sign in and wear a visitor badge—a simple stick-on name tag will do<input type="checkbox"/> When visitors arrive, the person with whom they have an appointment should escort them from reception and to the meeting area<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain an agent sign-in/sign-out board and ask agents to leave a property-showing itinerary at the office<input type="checkbox"/> Keep an up-to-date list (for use by managers and supervisors only) of agents' emergency contact information as well as make, model, and license plate numbers of vehicles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> If you encounter an individual while working alone, indicate that you are not alone. Say something like, "My supervisor will be right with you"<input type="checkbox"/> Don't discuss where you live or after-work or vacation plans within earshot of visitors, temporary or new coworkers, or anyone else who makes you feel uncomfortable<input type="checkbox"/> Don't leave purses, wallets, or small electronic on desks or tucked behind counters<input type="checkbox"/> Keep file cabinets locked<input type="checkbox"/> Lock up business letterhead, business cards, checkbooks, invoices, and business forms<input type="checkbox"/> Inventory and mark business equipment for easy identification in case of theft or damage<input type="checkbox"/> Lock up AV equipment when not in use<input type="checkbox"/> Secure spare and master keys in locked cabinets |
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If you must carry large sums of money—cash or checks—to the bank, use the buddy system or arrange for a security service or police escort. Stay aware of your surrounding throughout the trip. Be wary of any strangers lurking around the building entrance or office parking lot.

⁶ Adapted from NAR's REALTOR® Safety website, courtesy of Sonoma County Crime Crushers.

Safety Self-Assessment

1. Do I avoid wearing a valuable wristwatch or jewelry on the job?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. When showing property or sitting an open house, do I park my car at the curb where it cannot be blocked in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Am I physically fit enough to run for a city block or fight off an assault?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Do I keep separate Facebook pages (or other social media) for personal and business?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Does most of my business come from referrals from people I know?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
6. Do I show properties only during daylight hours?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Do I take a colleague or buddy along when entering a vacant property?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
8. Do I have a code word or distress signal set up with my office or family?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
9. Do I inform sellers about steps to take to keep their property safe during showings and open houses?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
10. Do I ask prospects to meet at the office or a public location for the first time before showing them properties?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
11. Do I ask prospects to fill out an identification form and photocopy their driver's licenses or IDs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
12. Do I have a safety app loaded on my smartphone?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

How many "yes" boxes did you check? _____

- ☐ **10–12:** Congratulations! You are safety conscious.
- ☐ **7–9:** You are usually safety conscious, but not all the time
- ☐ **4–6:** There's room for improvement
- ☐ **5 or fewer:** You are taking some major risks.

I-Note: **NOTE** that this chapter focused on risks involved in real estate business. **STATE** that the next chapter looks at implementing safety systems to reduce risk.

Listing Appointment Safety Checklist

- ☐ Ask how the seller found your company and you
- ☐ Verify the address and location of the property
- ☐ Verify if the caller is the owner of the property
- ☐ Subscribe to a background check website
- ☐ Do a background check on the caller
- ☐ Check out the history of the property (foreclosed? vacant? previously listed? FSBO?)
- ☐ Check out the location and neighborhood (is it in an isolated place? a dangerous neighborhood?)
- ☐ Take a colleague with you
- ☐ Let your office, family, or a friend know where you are going and who you are meeting
- ☐ Set your smartphone to send an alert or alarm
- ☐ When touring the property, always let the owner walk in front of you
- ☐ Avoid going into attics, basements, walk-in closets, or small dead-end spaces
- ☐ **What else could you add to this list?**

Open House and Model Home Safety Checklist

Before

- ☐ State in advertisements that identification will be required and surveillance will be in use
- ☐ Ask a friend or colleague to sit the open house or model home with you
- ☐ Lock your purse in your car trunk before arriving at the open house location
- ☐ Park at the curb so your car cannot be blocked
- ☐ Keep a hand free--carry only non-valuable business items
- ☐ Keep your phone and car keys with you at all times
- ☐ Check mobile phone's signal strength prior to the open house
- ☐ Inform neighbors of the open-house event and ask them to alert you of suspicious activity
- ☐ Check the rooms for dead ends and small spaces
- ☐ Position webcams, start up surveillance app
- ☐ Determine at least two escape routes from the property
- ☐ Check the outside for escape route obstacles—fences, shrubbery, ponds
- ☐ Unlock all deadbolt locks for easy access to the outside
- ☐ Lock other entrances so there is only one entry point
- ☐ Do not allow visitors to enter before you have completed your safety checks

During

- ☐ Sit in a room with a strong phone signal
- ☐ Start up the alert and alarm apps on your smartphone
- ☐ Establish a schedule for calls or alerts so that if you don't check in, your contact will call you
- ☐ Ask visitors to complete a guest register with full name, address, phone number, email, and vehicle information
- ☐ Throughout open house and model home hours, be alert to visitors' comings and goings.
- ☐ Consider hiring a security officer for the open-house event
- ☐ If the home has a security system, know how to trigger a remote notification of distress

After

- ☐ Inform the office, friend, or family when you begin closing; set an alert countdown or check-in time
- ☐ Lock front door before you do the security check of all doors and windows
- ☐ At close-up time, check the interior of the house prior to locking deadbolts
- ☐ Work from the top floor to the bottom, back of the house to the front, locking the deadbolts behind you
- ☐ Check the backyard and garage
- ☐ **What else could you add to this list?**

Agent's Property-Showing Safety Checklist

Before a Property Showing

- ☐ Check out prospects on Google, social media or a background checking site
- ☐ Ask prospect to meet at your office or in a public place
- ☐ Ask all prospects to fill out a customer identification form and provide ID
- ☐ Photocopy a prospect's driver's licenses
- ☐ Ask for a prequalification letter from lender, verify the letter's authenticity
- ☐ Introduce prospects to the office manager or a coworker
- ☐ Sign out on the office tracking board
- ☐ Leave a copy of your property-showing itinerary at the office.
- ☐ Wear a company identification badge and display your company name on your car
- ☐ Dress professionally in business outfits, wear shoes that you can run in
- ☐ Take a partner—another agent, friend, or family member—with you
- ☐ Set up a distress code with the office, friends, or family
- ☐ Make sure that co-workers, friends, or family who receive an alert know what to do
- ☐ Lock your purse or briefcase in your car trunk before arriving at an appointment
- ☐ Remind your clients to remove or lock away keys, credit cards, mail, bills, family photos, firearms, drugs, jewelry, fine crystal, furs, and other valuables and secure pets

At the Property

- ☐ Learn the house before your show it, look for escape routes and obstacles like fenced yards
- ☐ Show the property in daylight
- ☐ Park your car at the curb in front of the property, not the driveway
- ☐ Take a photo of the prospect's license plate and send it to the office
- ☐ Call or text the office to let them know you have arrived, where you are, and who you are with
- ☐ Set the alarm app on your phone for the time you think it will take to show the home
- ☐ Set the alert app on your phone for quick emergency notifications
- ☐ Keep at least one hand free
- ☐ Before entering a vacant property, walk the perimeter to check for signs of squatters, break-ins, or other illegal activity
- ☐ Follow lockbox procedures
- ☐ Leave the front door unlocked for a quick exit
- ☐ Walk behind the prospect as you view the property, don't turn your back
- ☐ Keep prospects together
- ☐ Stay close to the entrances of rooms and avoid going into cellars, attics, walk-in closets, and other "dead-end" rooms
- ☐ **What else could you add to the list?**

10-Second Safety Scan

People can find themselves in dangerous situations simply because they weren't paying attention. Whenever you arrive at a property, step out of your car, approach and enter, follow this 10-second safety scan to observe your surroundings. Make it part of your daily routine.

Take 2 seconds when you arrive at your destination

- Is your car parked in a well-lit, visible location?
- Can your car be blocked in the driveway?
- Is there any questionable activity in the area?

Take 2 seconds as you step out of your car

- Are there suspicious people around?
- Do you know exactly where you're going?

Take 2 seconds as you walk toward the property

- Are people coming and going?
- Is the area unusually quiet?
- Do you observe any obstacles or hiding places in the parking lot or along the street?
- Is anyone loitering in the area?

Take 2 seconds at the door

- Do you have an uneasy feeling as you're walking in?
- Is someone following you in?

Take 2 seconds as soon as you enter your destination

- Does anything seem out of place?
- Is anyone present who shouldn't be there?

Adapted from "What You Can Do About Safety," *REALTOR® Magazine*, September 2000, courtesy of Night Owl/Vector Security, Landover, Maryland.

Remember POWDER

- ♦ Parking your car
- ♦ Out of your car
- ♦ Walking to the property door
- ♦ Entering the property
- ♦ Reverse the scan steps when leaving

Seller's Property-Showing Checklist

- ☐ Remove keys, credit cards, checks, and cash*
- ☐ Lock up anything that contains personal information including letters and bills, ID badges, address books, and family notes and schedules on the refrigerator or a bulletin board*
- ☐ Remove or lock up valuables such as jewelry, furs, crystal, small electronics, laptops, and valuable collectibles*
- ☐ Remove or lock up firearms and ammunition, knives, and other weapons including knife blocks on kitchen counters*
- ☐ Lock up prescription drugs*
- ☐ Remove family photos, particularly of children*
- ☐ Repair items like a loose bannister and remove obstacles that could cause a fall
- ☐ Make arrangements to remove or secure pets during showings
- ☐ Consider extra security or monitoring for the period that the property is on the market
- ☐ After a showing, do a walk-through to check that doors and windows are locked, no items are missing, and nothing has been damaged
- ☐ Don't show the home on your own if prospects or another agent comes to the door
- ☐ Warn children not to open the door to strangers
- ☐ Place a "Not For Rent" sign in the window of a vacant property to prevent rental fraud
- ☐ Review homeowners insurance coverage
- ☐ **What else could you add to this list?**

*These items should be out of sight during photographing and filming for virtual tours posted on the Internet.

Smartphone Safety Checklist

- ☐ Download safety apps
- ☐ Carry your phone with you
- ☐ Keep the battery fully charged
- ☐ Program emergency numbers for alerts
- ☐ Set up a distress or alert signal that your emergency contacts will recognize
- ☐ Inform the office, your family, and co-workers of what to do in case of an alert
- ☐ Check signal strength at the location
- ☐ Advise the office of your location
- ☐ Provide the name and phone number of the client you are meeting
- ☐ Ask the office to call you on a regular schedule if you don't call in
- ☐ Take a picture of the prospect's license plate and send it to your office
- ☐ Program your phone to you call back, so you can simulate a conversation
- ☐ Use the hands-free mode while driving
- ☐ Avoid texting, taking notes, doing paperwork, or reading while driving
- ☐ **What else could you add to the list?**

Smart Passwords

The point of using an uncrackable password is to slow down hackers so they abandon attempts to decipher it. Common words and sequences of numbers are so easy to decipher that they offer no protection at all. In addition, the information you post on social media or your website can make it easy for a hacker to simply guess a password, like the names of your children, your birthday, a phone number, a favorite hobby or sports time, or a pet's name. Other types of passwords to avoid include names, places, sequences of numbers, and any word that appears in the dictionary. For example, look at these passwords and the estimated time to crack them:

IluvU 1 second **12345** 1 second **qwerty** 1 second
welcome 1 second **Howryou** 2 seconds **Highfive** 52 seconds
Spongebob 52 seconds **iloveme** 4 minutes **Iloveyou2** 14 minutes
Starbucks 22 minutes

Passwords that mix random letters, numbers, symbols, and upper and lower case letters slow hackers down. The problem is creating a complex combination that you can remember. Following are some methods for creating hard-to-crack passwords. **You can test the strength of passwords at www.howsecureismypassword.net.**

Random combinations

Combine a random selection of letters with numbers and symbols

9r//ST==Ma147 Time to crack: 465 million years

Acronyms

You can create an acronym from any sentence or sequence of words such as the first line of a favorite book or poem or a sentence you will remember.

I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree **Acronym: IttlIsns/Aplaat**

Time to crack: 655 million years

My 3 favorite ice cream flavors are pistachio vanilla and strawberry **Acronym: m3ficfRpv&s**

Time to crack: 4 thousand years

Picture, Action, Object (PAO)

Imagine a memorable character, place them in a vivid setting, and imagine an action. Then create a password using the first two letters of the main words. For example, Ben Franklin at the beach playing volleyball on the 4th of July in 1776

Ben Franklin beach volleyball July 4, 1776 **Acronym: BeFrBeVo741776**

Time to crack: 98 million years