

# SAFETY & THE POWER OF YOUR INTUITION C7857



***Basics & Beyond***  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

As a result of completing this section, you shall be able to:

- Understand how easy it can happen to you
- Identify the two primary goals for safety awareness

## **MEETING NEW PROSPECTS – A RISKY BUSINESS**

As a result of completing this section, you shall be able to:

- Know & understand why agents agree to meet strangers without first qualify them at the office
- Identify the primary reasons for having a new prospect come into the office
- Identify actions you should implement to keep yourself safe when meeting new prospects for the first time.
- Identify ways to assess your surroundings and know what actions to take if in danger.
- Identify & use the 10-second rule to keep safety at the forefront of your day.

## **MEETING VISITORS AT OPEN HOUSES**

As a result of completing this section, you shall be able to:

- Identify habits you should implement to keep yourself safe when holding open houses.

## **IMPLEMENTING A SAFETY AWARENESS PROGRAM**

As a result of completing this section, you shall be able to:

- Identify the characteristics of a good distress signal.
- Describe actions you should take to prepare for using a distress signal.
- Identify what safety precautions you should take when working in the office.
- Understand the reasons for requiring all prospects to complete a Customer Identification Form.
- Complete and keep an Agent Identification Emergency Form on file in your office.

## **EXAM**

To receive credit for this correspondence course, students must receive a 70% or better score on the final exam.

# **“Safety & The Power of Your Intuition”**

You meet lots of people in the real estate business, some nice and some not so nice. As a real estate practitioner, you’re faced with potentially risky situations every day. Meeting new clients, showing homes, holding open houses and even walking to your car can be dangerous. It’s essential that you make safe decisions and know how to react when confronted with trouble. This course is designed to assist you in recognizing not only the dangers associated with our business but identifying means for reducing the risks.

The stories and many of the recommendations contained in this course may be found on the National Association of Realtors® website and the Realtor® Safety Week Kit.

## **INTRODUCTION**

🚩 ***“IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU” – A TRUE STORY --“I had one incident right before Christmas that really had me freaked out”, related a Port Orchard sales associate. I had a walk-in about a week before Christmas and took him out over the next few days to show him houses in the Seabeck area. We were looking at \$700,000 and up homes. His story seemed to check out, but there was one day when we were out looking and were discussing that the next house we would see was vacant. We got out of the car and as I was using my MLS key to get in, I noticed he was putting on black leather gloves behind me. I opened the door and let him in first and I never left the entryway. I left the door open and kept my hand on my cell phone. His actions scared me but what was worse (or as it turned out maybe best) is that we set up to look at more homes the next day. He never showed and I never heard from him again. It could have been innocent but it was a bit scary.”***

How often have you heard a similar story? Maybe you agreed “that was scary”; maybe you brushed it off believing the storyteller had an overly-active imagination. We are in a business where we help people achieve the American Dream of Home Ownership. But we do need to take certain safety precautions if we are to keep from becoming a statistic or living our own personal nightmare.



Police officers often comment that they think real estate professionals are crazy! They ask – “Would you welcome a complete stranger into your home or get into a car alone with someone you had just met?” Most of you would respond with a resounding “NO”! Real estate professionals, however, do this everyday. Although every job that requires interaction with the public involves some risk, you can temper the risks in the real estate industry through thoughtful, pro-active awareness and actions.

- Real Estate offices can certainly initiate safety policies and procedures to help keep you from becoming a victim. And we’ll discuss some of these actions later in the course. But the first goal for safety is to become responsible for your own safety. It doesn’t matter how concise policies and procedures are if they’re not practiced ALL THE TIME! The second goal for safety is to respect fear without being ruled by it. The best way of accomplishing this is to continually listen to your intuition and practice sound safety habits.
- Real estate professionals have historically enjoyed working with the public in a relatively safe environment, but the trend has shifted in recent years and the number of agents experiencing violence while showing homes or holding homes open has increased. Many real estate firms have responded to this violence by implementing procedures to help keep their agents safe. If your office has developed agent safety policies, follow them. If it hasn’t, there are several things you can do to help minimize your risks. Let’s explore potentially unsafe situations and habits that you can implement to protect yourself.

## Meeting New Prospects – A Risky Business

How many times have you taken a floor call and the caller has said:

- ✚ “I just have a short time – I’ll be looking during my lunch hour” or
  - ✚ “Your office is 20 minutes away and I live right beside the property” or
  - ✚ “We have to be at another appointment at 2 o’clock” or
  - ✚ “I’ll be paying all cash and will be able to close in two weeks”.
- ✚ All of the comments seem innocent on the surface and you may have been lured into accepting these and a myriad of other reasons a potential prospect might give for avoiding your office. Your response to these and other

avoidance tactics can save you a lot of time, establish you as a professional, and most importantly, keep you safe.



Barbara Peterson, GRI and a local associate in the Fort Campbell, KY area, relayed this true story.

***“A couple of years ago, a young, attractive female agent in her office received what seemed to be a very legitimate floor call. Their market includes the Fort Campbell, Ky area, and the call was from a purported lieutenant who explained in earnest that he had several staff meetings to attend that day and really wanted to see her listing during the lunch hour. This ambitious agent agreed to the meeting and, luckily, had another agent in the office accompany her. When they arrived at the house, the front door was unlocked. They entered the house, went up the steps, and were confronted by a stranger who jumped out from hiding, shook the male agent’s hand, and fled down the stairs. This stranger was wearing black gloves, and his true intentions will never be known.”***

As real estate professionals, you constantly market yourself to the public with photos, phone numbers, and production statistics. You often reveal personal information, such as your family members, hobbies, and even where you live. You tell the public everything about yourself and yet may agree to meet a complete stranger in the guise of a prospect at a house knowing only the prospect’s name.

Most real estate professionals have a great deal of faith in people. But it only takes one meeting that goes sour to result in personal harm. Why do so many agree to meet these strangers? One reason maybe FEAR! Fear of losing the sale. Fear of what other’s might think (about your paranoia). It’s important to understand, though, that true buyers are those who will agree to meet at your office without resistance. Ready, willing, and able buyers will your professional approach and will be understanding enough to gladly meet you at your office.

Callers disguised as prospects who use loan sharking tactics (“Now that I’ve helped you with this, you owe me big time!”), or unsolicited promises (“I promise I won’t waste your time”), or typecasting (“You’re not one of those scaredy cat agents, are you?”), generally have something other than purchasing property on their mind.

Bad guys use flattery to distract you from their true intent. They are professionals who don't play by our rules. They lie and they manipulate. Don't become their victim!

✚ Meeting at the office goes a long ways towards eliminating the guesswork of meeting new prospects and reducing the risks to your personal safety. You should make it a habit to make an office meeting the first step in meeting a new prospect. What better way to determine whether you and the prospect are a match, to qualify them, and to learn their desires and needs. If the prospect resists coming into the office, it says a lot about them. Some of the reasons they may not want to come into the office are:

✚ **They are not ready to buy.** You've most likely experienced the buyer who meets you at a property; they look it over and then say “We'll have to think about this one. We'll let you know.” They are very difficult to talk to at the property. They travel through the house and evade answering your questions to the best of their ability.



✚ **They do not qualify.** (And why on earth would you want to spend your valuable time working with someone who won't or can't get financially qualified)

✚ **They have appointments set up all over town** (with other agents). They've most likely been looking for a long time and have not committed to an agent.

✚ **They don't like salespeople.** When you've decided to purchase a new car, you may have visited a car lot. When you demonstrated interest in a particular car, did the salesperson run into the showroom, grab a briefcase of papers, and give you a bottom line on the hood of the car? Most likely they invited you into their office to put some numbers on paper. That salesperson knows that the closer they can get you to their office, the more committed you are.

So how do you get potential home buyers on your turf?

✚ Ask Them!

✚ Have a Painless Meeting

✚ **ASK THEM!** If the potential prospect is a motivated, earnest buyer, they are generally easy to deal with when approached professionally. They are cooperative when simply ASKED to meet at the office. For example: Let's say you have placed an ad in the paper for one of your listings and you receive a call. They want to see the property. A quick and effective response might be, “Certainly, when can I meet you at my office?” or “I will be in my office from 1 to 3 p.m. tomorrow.

What would be a good time for us to meet?” Oftentimes, first time buyers do not understand the buying process and will be glad to have it explained to them.

- ✚ **PAINLESS MEETING** – Potential buyers who resist coming into your office may believe that you will keep them there for an extended time, drilling them. Let them know that you can understand that they are busy. You have a busy schedule too. Let them know that you can limit your first meeting to 15-20 minutes and then be prepared with a well-structured meeting so that you can begin the qualification process and obtain a great deal of information about the prospect.

Other ways to get potential home buyers on your turf –

- ✚ Personal Benefit
- ✚ Educate Them
- ✚ Future Relationship
- ✚ Office Policy

- ✚ **PERSONAL BENEFIT** – Let them know that you understand they have a busy schedule. Tell them how you can review much of the property information at the office, that you have photos of the interior and a disclosure you’d like them to review prior to previewing the property.



- ✚ **EDUCATE THEM** – Let them know about the showing process; that you need to make an appointment before showing it. Tell them that you can set a tentative showing appointment and that you can confirm it when you meet them at the office.

- ✚ **FUTURE RELATIONSHIP** – Explain your future relationship with them; educate them about agency and the advantages of signing a buyer’s agreement.

- ✚ **OFFICE POLICY** – Explain to them your requirement to meet at the office for your safety. “I certainly understand, and I’m sorry to inconvenience you, but this is a dangerous business. We don’t know each other, and it is important that our first meeting be at the office.”

### **NAR Safe Steps Checklist**

- ✚ Meet first time prospects in the office. Make sure you are not alone in the office when meeting them. If you are alone, call a friend or colleague before

the client is due to arrive and ask them to call and check on you 15 minutes into the visit. Then call them back when the person has left your office.




When the person arrives, get the make, model and license number of their car. Check this information yourself--don't just take their word for it. You can do this discreetly by watching them drive up, glancing out at their car, or checking it when you leave the office.



Ask each new client to complete a Customer Identification Form, preferably in the presence of an associate. (See sample below). Ask for their work, phone and cell phone numbers and a physical address. Try to verify the information by calling the customer at one or more numbers. If you cannot do that, enter the customer's home phone number or name, city and state on Google to see if you get a match.

(Your logo here)



**CUSTOMER IDENTIFICATION FORM**

This form is designed for your safety and security, along with that of property owners and our agents. We appreciate your consideration and cooperation. All security information is confidential and will not be sold or used for solicitation purposes.

This information may be subject to verification. Form is to be kept in branch office.

AGENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME & BUSINESS #'S: \_\_\_\_\_

IF FROM OUT OF TOWN: LOCAL CONTACT PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

I (we) can be contacted at this location until \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

AUTO: MAKE & MODEL \_\_\_\_\_ COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_

OWNER: \_\_\_\_\_

LICENSE #: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Photocopy Driver's License(s) or other Photo ID(s) in this space



Use a registration book for all clients and other visitors. Be careful to make sure that everyone signs in so as not to be in violation of Fair Housing Rules and Regulations.



Photocopy the clients' driver's license and retain this information at your office. Legitimate clients should not mind you copying their driver's license. People freely show their licenses to the clerk at the grocery store when they write checks, and you show your ID to rent a movie. Be sure to dispose of this sensitive information properly when you are finished with it.

### **A serious client will NOT hesitate to share this information!**



Check county property records to confirm home ownership.



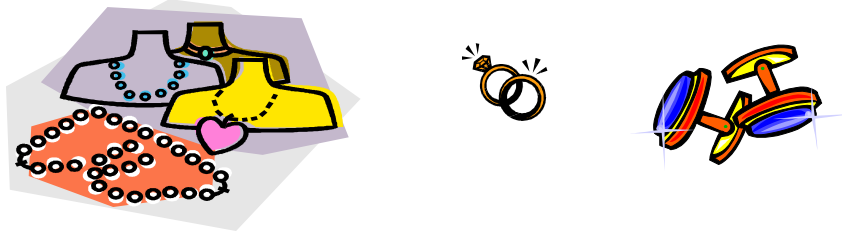
Introduce the prospect to someone in your office. A would-be assailant does not like to be noticed or receive exposure, knowing a person could pick him/her out of a police lineup.



Always let someone know where you are going; leave the name and phone number of the client you are meeting. Leave your itinerary with the office staff, a significant other or someone who cares. Do this in the presence of your prospect whenever possible. Make it your policy to check in every hour when you're with clients. No excuses. If you don't call in, the office should call you right away.

The form is titled "AGENT ITINERARY FORM" and is from the "Real Safety Estate Council". It contains a warning box: "This form is designed for your safety and security. Please leave the completed form with the receptionist, along with your showing itinerary information." Below this, there are several fields for information: "AGENT: \_\_\_\_\_" and "DATE: \_\_\_\_\_"; "CUSTOMER/CLIENT NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_" with two checkboxes: " Personal Identification Form attached." and " Personal Identification Form already on file with \_\_\_\_\_"; "ANTICIPATED TIME OF RETURN TO OFFICE: \_\_\_\_\_ AM \_\_\_\_\_ PM"; "MY CONTACT PHONE WHILE SHOWING PROPERTY: \_\_\_\_\_"; and "COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_".

When talking to any client or prospect, be careful not to share personal information—specifically, details about where you live or information that can allow the person to pinpoint your home. Building rapport and promoting yourself is a double edge sword – you use it as a mean for connecting with prospects, with building trust. You also use it as a means for promoting yourself to gain additional business. Wait on sharing personal information until you’re sure you really want to share it.



Don’t be too flashy. Wear conservative clothing and avoid ostentatious jewelry that could make you a target for theft. Perpetrators have been known to scan real estate photos looking for victims. Make sure your business photos are professional, not sexy, so that you don’t attract unwanted attention.

When showing a property, always leave the front door open while you and the client are inside. As you enter each room, stand near the door. If you do get caught off guard, prepare a scenario so that you can leave or encourage the person making you uncomfortable to leave.

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You don’t need to feel obligated to act as a chauffeur. Always use your own vehicle when showing property so you stay in control. If a client insists on driving, let him take his own car and follow behind you.

- ✚ If you encounter a threatening situation while in your vehicle, hit the brakes to startle your attacker. An alternative that some agent advocates recommend is to create a minor, slow speed accident in a public place by brushing up against a fixed object – then open your door and run. If that’s not possible, pull the car very close to an object on the right side so that your passenger cannot easily get out, then run.
- ✚ Be noisy, create as much attention as possible to frighten your attacker.

- Remember to lock the doors whenever entering or leaving your vehicle to prevent criminals from attacking you after you're in the car, or waiting for you in the car while you're running errands.
- Don't park your car where it can be blocked in and beware of dead-end streets.
- Keep your car in good running condition and your car's gas tank filled above a quarter-tank. Keep a battery jumper, a spare tire, and a roadside emergency kit including a flashlight and flares to ensure you don't get stranded.



- Always carry your cell phone with you. Program it on speed dial for 911.
- If something feels or appears wrong, get out right away. Have an excuse or explanation ready or use a Distress Signal which we'll discuss later in this lesson. If it feels funny, it probably is. You need to trust your intuition because it is an additional source of information.
- Intuition is always right in two ways
  - (a) it is always in response to something and
  - (b) it always has your best interest at heart.

Ask yourself how you feel about what is happening. Pay attention to your first impression and keep track of your intuitive reaction. Follow your instincts when showing a home.

Remember, it's better to walk away from a listing or not show a house if you have an uneasy feeling.

- Keep an eye on the exits during home showings. Never walk into a room first. Instead, allow potential buyers to explore areas of the home on their own, with you following behind to answer their questions. Avoid escorting prospects into basement or other secluded areas where you can become trapped. Always position yourself between the customer and the exit.
- Don't be lulled into safety by callers who say they will be paying all cash and they can close in two weeks. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it more than likely is.



✚ Be prepared. Carry pepper spray on your key ring and in your car and know how to use it. Pepper spray is a chemical that causes temporary pain and even blindness when sprayed on an attacker. It also can be used against aggressive animals. Taking a personal safety course is another way to become prepared.

✚ Never say you're alone – If you encounter an individual while working late at the office, never indicate to that person that you are by yourself. If you're meeting a customer at a home for a showing, never say anything about the home being 'vacant'. Make it seem as though other people may be there.

## A SURVIVOR'S WARNING – TRUST YOUR GUT

***“We all think it can't happen to us,” Joan Malone, salesperson with Re/Max-DFW, Dallas who had a run-in with danger and almost lost her life. “Especially if you live in a community like mine: mostly professional, average home price \$190,000, a small-town atmosphere. But bad guys have nice cars, too.”***

***When Malone met up with her bad guy, she did everything right except trust her own instincts.***

***The well-dressed buyer came into the office and told her he was an attorney who was dissolving a partnership and would have all-cash funds in a few days. He gave her his name and a working telephone number. He drove a nice car. There were people with him – two women and a child. After Malone had shown them several houses, they left without a purchase. Several weeks later, the buyer resurfaced and made an appointment to see houses. Malone felt uneasy.***

***The next afternoon, while showing him a house, Malone was brutally attacked by the buyer. She was knocked to the ground and broke her back. He started to rape her, but she fought him off. Instead, he strangled her until she was unconscious and then stabbed her. He robbed her and drove away in her car. After Malone regained consciousness, she crawled to a phone, dialed 911, and collapsed.***

***But she also had a paper trail—with the man's real name—that helped police catch him. Malone was able to identify the attacker who is currently serving a 40 year sentence in a maximum security prison with no chance of parole for a minimum of 20 years.***

***“Listen to your inner voice,” says Malone. “I had a gut feeling, but I argued with myself anyway.”***

Your business is based on the bottom line—how much of what you make you can keep. Sometimes when calculating this, however, you forget to consider the intangibles, such as your personal safety. This is a risky business but you can make a commitment to yourself – to put your personal safety above all else. Sell smart, sell safe—meet your buyers at the office first!

## **THE 10 SECOND RULE**

One of the most common reasons that people find themselves in dangerous situations is that they weren't paying attention. Take a few precious seconds during the course of your day to assess your surroundings. Source: “What You Can Do About Safety” Realtor Magazine, Sep 2000

**Take 2 seconds** when you arrive at your destination and ask yourself –

- Is there any questionable activity in the area?
- Are you parked in a well-lit, visible location?
- Can you be blocked in the driveway by a prospect's vehicle?

**Take 2 seconds** after you step out of your car and ask yourself –

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

**Take 2 seconds** as you walk towards your destination and ask yourself –

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

**Take 2 seconds** as the door and ask yourself –

- 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 and ask yourself –

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



You are not the only one at risk when showing a property – the NAR suggests you follow these steps to help your clients protect themselves against crime:

- ✚ Remind clients who are selling their house that strangers will be walking through their home. Tell them to hide any valuables in a safe, secure place. This includes prescription drugs.
- ✚ At an open house, be alert to the pattern of visitors' arrivals, especially near the end of showing hours. In some areas, a group of thieves will show up together near the end of the open house and, while a string of supposed

potential buyers distract you, the rest of the group walks through the house, stealing any valuables they come across.

- ✚ When you leave a client’s property, whether after an open house or a standard showing, make sure that all doors and windows are locked. Thieves commonly use open houses to scout for valuables and possible points of entry, then return after the agent leaves.
  - ✚ Let your clients know that you will take all of the above safety precautions, but that when they return home, they should immediately verify that all doors are locked and all valuables accounted for.
- Source: Nevada County Board of Realtors (CA)

## Meeting Visitors at Open Houses

Hosting open houses is one of those activities where you can differentiate yourself from the competition by not only offering a significantly higher level of service but by ensuring you, your visitors, and your sellers are safe. Paying attention to detail not only applies to your preparation for the open house but also to being constantly alert to who attends and their actions while viewing the home.

Since you have no idea who will walk into your open house, it is important to take precautions to protect yourself as well as the seller’s property. Even when you work with a partner, you should use extreme caution and make safety a priority. Most sales associates have been fortunate not to have had a bad experience and so with complacency think “it won’t happen to me”. But our business gets more dangerous by the day.

You must quickly develop a sense of how to size up visitors. Asking open ended questions such as “how long have you been looking” or “have you spoken with a lender”, helps you determine how serious the client is or whether you need to tune up your intuition.

Be clear and focused about what you are doing, move with confidence, and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

*Christine Vyborny, a broker with Century 21 Country North in Roscoe, Ill, has always followed her hunches. At an open house several years ago, the sudden arrival of a group of boisterous men and women suddenly made her uncomfortable. She promptly walked outside and stood on the lawn until the crowd left. “I felt outnumbered—simple as that,” Vyborny says. “It was an intimidating situation.” Would something bad have happened if Vyborny didn’t follow her instincts? Luckily, she’ll never have to find out. Self defense experts say she did just the right thing by quickly removing herself from the risky situation.*

The majority of people working in this field are women. Men, who compromise 41 percent of real estate professionals, also can't afford to let their guard down.

## **No one is immune to crime!**



An open house can be a great sales tool, but it also exposes you to numerous unfamiliar people at once. The National Association of Realtors® suggests that you take the following steps to stay safe:

- ✚ **DRESS APPROPRIATELY** – Ask yourself, if you had to escape quickly from an open house, would you be able to. High heels, tight skirts, and cowboys boots don't make for a quick escape. Expensive-looking jewelry, large amounts of cash or credit cards also makes you a target for thieves.
- ✚ **EDUCATE SELLERS** – Remind your sellers to secure their credit cards, jewelry, weapons, prescription drugs, and other valuables.
- ✚ **REGISTER VISITORS** – Ask everyone to sign in for “security reasons”. Ask for their full name, address, phone number and e-mail. Even if they don't wish to be contacted in the future, ask them to sign in
- ✚ **CONSIDER YOUR OPEN HOUSE LOCATIONS** – Never have an open house at an isolated property. How much traffic will you generate anyway!?
- ✚ **BUDDY UP** – If possible, always try to have at least one other person working with you at the open house.
- ✚ **INVOLVE YOUR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT** – Although this may not be practical in many towns, if possible, call the local police department and ask them to have a squad car drive by during your open house hours.
- ✚ **CHECK YOUR CELL** phone's strength and signal prior to agreeing to hold an open house. If you have a weak or no signal, consider holding a different house open. Have emergency numbers pre-programmed on speed dial.
- ✚ **CHECK ALL ROOMS** (upon entering a house for the first time) and determine several “escape” routes. Make sure all deadbolt locks are unlocked to facilitate a faster escape. Make sure that if you were to escape by a back or side door, you can actually escape from the backyard. Frequently, high fences surround yards that contain swimming pools or hot tubs.

- ✚ **PLACE ONE OF YOUR BUSINESS CARDS**, with the date and time written on the back, in a kitchen cabinet. Note on it if you were the first to arrive or if clients were waiting.
  
- ✚ **ALWAYS WALK BEHIND PROSPECTS** when showing a house. Direct them; don’t lead them. Say, for example, “The kitchen is on your left,” and gesture for them to go ahead of you. Never let the buyer get between you and an exit.
  
- ✚ **AVOID ATTICS, BASEMENTS**, and getting trapped in small rooms.
  
- ✚ **KEEP YOUR HANDS FREE** but have your keys and cell phone with you at all times. The panic button on newer car key/fobs make for a great distraction and attention getter if you need to arouse attention.
  
- ✚ **NOTIFY SOMEONE IN YOUR OFFICE**, your answering service, a friend or a relative that you will be calling in every hour on the hour. And if you don’t call, they are to call you.
  
- ✚ **INFORM A NEIGHBOR** that you will be showing the house and ask if he/she would keep an eye and ear open for anything out of the ordinary.
  
- ✚ **DON’T ASSUME** that everyone has left the premises at the end of the open house. Check all of the rooms and the backyard prior to locking the doors. Be prepared to defend yourself, if necessary.



## FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

### **IF YOU STRIKE, MEAN IT!**

You must consider the best response to a physical attack **FOR YOU!**

If you were to find yourself alone in a property with a client who indicated they wanted to harm you or rob you, what would you do? Would you put up a fight or try to escape?

It isn’t pleasant to think about, but it’s important to know the facts. Experts agree that when escape is an option, that is the route you should take. Remember, your primary goal in any incident is to escape from the danger and call for help.

When faced with menacing behavior, you should first try to find a discreet way of removing yourself from the situation. Try to avoid triggering the emotion a predator might use to justify an attack. For example: You can say that you need to step outside to make a phone call and then don't come back inside.

If an attack does occur, trust yourself and stay as calm as possible. Think rationally and evaluate your options. There is no single right way to respond to a confrontation, because each situation is different. Your response should depend on the circumstances, the location of the attack, your personal resources, the presence of weapons and your assailant's characteristics.

There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your judgment to choose the best one FOR YOU.

- ✚ **No resistance:** Not resisting can be the proper choice in a given situation. An attacker with a gun or a knife may put you in a situation where you think it is safer to do what he or she says. If someone tries to rob you, give up your property, not your life.
- ✚ **Stalling for time:** Appear to go along with the attacker. This might give you time to assess the situation. When his guard is down, try to escape.
- ✚ **Distraction and then flight:** Obviously you should try to get away, but whether you can depends on many things, including your shoes and clothing, physical stamina, the terrain and your proximity to your attacker.
- ✚ **Verbal assertiveness:** If someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands in front of you and yell “STOP!” or “STAY BACK!” Criminals have been known to leave a victim alone if he or she yelled and showed that he or she was not afraid to fight back.
- ✚ **Physical Resistance:** If you decide to respond physically, remember that your first response should be to flee the area or the home. Act quickly and decisively to throw the attacker off guard while you get away.

### **YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY IS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY!**

Property can be replaced, but the value of your life and health is beyond measure. Also, you should familiarize yourself with the state's laws concerning self-defense, including the issue of what is proper or improper use of force to defend yourself during an attack.

**OBSERVATION:** Be sure to make an effort to get an accurate description of your attacker. Even the smallest details may give authorities a clue to finding the suspect.

**ADVERTISING:** Don't advertise your open house listing as vacant.

- Sources: Washington Real Estate Safety Council; A Woman’s Guide to Personal Safety.

## Implementing a Safety Awareness Program

Real Estate companies are often in the best position to keep practitioners out of harm’s way, according to crime experts interviewed by Today’s Realtor®.

Following are 5 ideas they say you might do to keep safety first in the minds of salespeople.

1. **ESTABLISH SAFETY MEASURES** – Initiate office safety strategies such as the buddy system.
  - Have salespeople sign out of the office and indicate where they’ll be.
  - Have a registration book for office visitors. In large offices, issue an in-house ID tag or access card to salespeople and staffers that can be worn at all times.
  - Establish a secure location in your office where staffers can go in case of a threatening situation.
  - Put safety policies in writing and make sure everyone follows them.
  - Make sure private offices and work areas aren’t accessible to visitors. The less outsiders know about the inner workings of your office – where salespeople sit, nooks and crannies, and back doors – the better chance you and the salespeople have to escape in an emergency.
2. **SWITCH OPEN HOUSES** – If safety is a concern, have salespeople partner at open houses or have a male salesperson substitute for a female.
  - J.J. Bittenbinder, a former homicide detective with the Chicago Police Department and a nationally recognized personal safety expert, notes that more females than males are attacked but males need to be safety cautious too.
3. **MAKE PERIODIC CHECKS** – Visit or at least call open houses where practitioners are working.
3. **KNOW WHERE SALESPEOPLE ARE**—Establish a call-in system, requiring salespeople to call the office at specific times. If the office is closed on weekends, arrange for salespeople to call one another.
3. **CREATE A SECRET LANGUAGE**—Ray Botterbush, a real estate practitioner who is vice president of Botterbush and Associates Ind. and deputy sheriff of Madison County, Ill, recommends using a voice stress code, a secret word or phrase that can let another party know there’s a problem.

## Set up a Distress Code System

What is a Distress Code?

- ✚ A distress code is a spoken word or phrase that is not commonly used but can be worked into any phone or in-person conversation for cases where you feel that you are in potential danger. Use this code if the person you are with can overhear the conversation, but you don't want to alarm them.

### STEPS FOR SETTING UP AND USING A DISTRESS CODE

**1. Choose a distress code word or phrase** and share it with your colleagues, friends, and family—anyone you might call in an emergency situation. Your distress code should be something simple, something that makes sense to you and is easy to remember, and something that will not alert your prospect.

- EXAMPLES
- “Hi, this is Jane, I'm at (address). Could you look up something in the RED FILE for me?” or
- “I'm with Mr. Henderson, and I just realized that I can't find my BLACKBERRY. Can you see if I left it there?” (Assuming you don't have a Blackberry).

It may make the most sense for everyone in your office to share a single distress code; this will be easiest to remember for everyone, including the staff.

**2. Share and Practice your distress code** with your office, your colleagues and your family and friends. You may have a designated person you plan to call, but circumstances may change that. It's best to have several people prepped and ready to receive a call with your distress code.

3. The colleague who receives your call with the distress code will then be alerted that you may be in danger. At your pre-arranged signal, **they will know to call 911 on your behalf**, or, after asking a few careful questions, can arrange to meet you so that you are not alone, or call you back and ask you to return to the office to respond to an “emergency situation. It's important that your colleague (family, friend, business associate ...) know which options (in addition to calling 911 for you) that you'd like them to pursue.

**When should you use the distress code?** In situations where you are uneasy and your instincts tell you to get help; when you're feeling a little nervous; when you need help at an open house.

If you are in immediate danger – leave the area or stop the car and jump out at the next stop. Also, don't hesitate to call 911 in an emergency.

Source: Washington Real Estate Safety Council

Offices might also consider posting the “Dear Valued Clients” notice shown below in conference rooms, in reception areas, or any other areas where agents may meet prospects during their initial visit.


Customers are asked to show their driver’s license when performing such mundane tasks as renting videos, writing checks etc. Agents shouldn’t be afraid to ask them to show some type of identification before showing property. Legitimate buyers & sellers will understand and honor your concern for safety.



Brokers should have each of their sales associates complete and update annually an Agent Identification Form (shown below)

This form (if kept up to date) will provide office staff with current emergency information for all sales associates if the need arises.

(Your logo here)



**AGENT IDENTIFICATION FORM**  
Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT NUMBERS: (Include area codes)  
Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pager: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Office: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY CONTACTS: (Provide at least one)

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	PHONE(S)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

AUTO: (List your most frequently used auto first.)  
MAKE & MODEL: \_\_\_\_\_  
COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_  
OWNER: \_\_\_\_\_  
LICENSE #: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> AUTO: MAKE & MODEL: \_\_\_\_\_  
COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_  
OWNER: \_\_\_\_\_

PRIMARY PHYSICIAN: \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS/MEDICATION:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note: Keep a record of your major credit card information in a safe, accessible place in case of an emergency, loss or theft of cards.

### SAFETY & THE POWER OF YOUR INTUITION - EXAM

Multiple choice/True or False: Place the correct letter in front of the corresponding number.

- \_\_\_\_ 1. To protect against theft during a home showing or open house, you should
- Treat every potential buyer like an escaped convict
  - Be especially wary of men who come to view the home alone
  - Remind sellers to put all valuables in a safe place
  - All of the above
- \_\_\_\_ 2. One way to stay safe on the job is to have a distress voice signal for when you want to call for help without alarming someone who can overhear you. To create such a signal, you should
- Establish a secret phrase that's not commonly used but can be worked into any phone or in-person conversation when you're feeling uneasy about a situation.
  - Carry a dog whistle that is mute to humans but will irritate canines, and blow into the whistle whenever you're feeling uneasy about a situation.
  - Think of a common distress word such as "help" or "fire" that you can shout to grab everyone's attention when you're feeling uneasy about a situation.
  - All of the above.

- \_\_\_\_ 3. When holding an open house, you should:
- Inform a neighbor that you’ll be showing the house and ask if he or she would keep an eye and ear open for anything out the ordinary.
  - Check all rooms before anyone arrives and determine several “escape” routes. Make sure all deadbolt locks are unlocked to facilitate a faster escape.
  - Don’t assume that everyone has left the premises at the end of the day. Check all rooms and the backyard prior to locking the doors, and be prepared to defend myself.
  - All of the above.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. When meeting prospective clients for the first time, you can stay safe by:
- Ask them to meet you at the brokerage office
  - Find out their motivation for buying or selling
  - Write their first name and email address on a note card and leave it with a colleague.
  - All of the above
- \_\_\_\_ 5. When you’re working at the office, you should take this safety precaution:
- Make sure that your desk is not visible from the front door.
  - Secure all unused doors and windows, especially if they’re in the rear of the office or out of sight and earshot.
  - Listen to music on headphones to boost your concentration.
  - All of the above.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. T or F You can temper the risks in the real estate industry through thoughtful, pro-active awareness and actions.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. T or F The first goal for safety is to become responsible for your own safety.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. Many agents agree to meet strangers without first having them come into the office to qualify them because
- Fear of losing the sale
  - Fear of what other’s might think
  - Fear of what the stranger might think
  - All of the above
- \_\_\_\_ 9. T or F Agents should consider requiring prospects to come into the office as part of their qualification process.
- \_\_\_\_ 10. The primary reasons for having a new prospect come into the office include:
- To determine whether you and the prospect are a match
  - To qualify them
  - To learn their desires and needs
  - All of the above

- \_\_\_ 11. The 10-second rule is a smart and quick way to keep safety at the forefront throughout the day. How does it work?
- Take 10 seconds to review self-defense strategies right before getting out of the car.
  - Breathe deeply and count backwards from 10 to gain composure before meeting new people.
  - Take 10 seconds as you arrive at each destination to evaluate your surroundings and check for anything that’s out of the ordinary.
  - All of the above
- \_\_\_ 12. T or F The most effective and sure way to get accurate information about the make, model and license number of a prospect’s car is to ask them.
- \_\_\_ 13. T or F Legitimate clients will give you a difficult time if you ask to copy their driver’s license even though they freely show their license to clerks at grocery stores.
- \_\_\_ 14. T or F When holding a house open, it’s best to park your car in the driveway.
- \_\_\_ 15. T or F As a means for connecting with prospects, it is recommended that you share as much personal information about yourself during your initial meeting.
- \_\_\_ 16. When showing property, it is recommended that you
- Stand near the door as you allow prospects to explore rooms
  - Lead the prospect through the house
  - Show basements and attics
  - Leave your cell phone in your car so as not to disturb showings
- \_\_\_ 17. The NAR recommends that when you hold a house open, you
- Dress in such a manner that you can escape quickly if you need to
  - Only require those visitors that most concern you to register
  - Not worry about the remote location of your open house
  - Work the open house alone so you can get all the prospects
- \_\_\_ 18. T or F You should designate only one person to receive a distress code from you.
- \_\_\_ 19. T or F Your intuition is an additional source of information and always has your best interest at heart.
- \_\_\_ 20. T or F It’s better to walk away from a listing or not show a house if you have an uneasy feeling.
- \_\_\_ 21. When you arrive at your destination, you should ask yourself
- Is there any questionable activity in the area?
  - Are you parked in a well-lit, visible location?
  - Can your vehicle be blocked in?
  - All of the above

\_\_\_ 22. T or F The second goal for safety is to not allow yourself to be ruled by fear.

\_\_\_ 23. T or F The closer you can get a prospect to your office, the better chance you have of them committing to work with you.

\_\_\_ 24. T or F Always position yourself between the customer and the exit.

\_\_\_ 25. T or F If you work in a mostly professional neighborhood, you don't need to concern yourself with personal safety issues.

\_\_\_ 26. A distress code should be  
a. Something simple  
b. Something that makes sense to you  
c. Something that's easy to remember  
d. All of the above

\_\_\_ 27. T or F If you feel in danger, you should immediately leave the area and/or call 911.

\_\_\_ 28. T or F The 10-second rule allows you to periodically assess your surroundings.

\_\_\_ 29. T or F When you enter a house you'll be holding open, you only need concern yourself with checking possible escape routes in case of danger.

\_\_\_ 30. A cell phone can be your life line when setting open houses or showing property. You should:  
a. Check the strength of your signal  
b. Pre-program emergency numbers  
c. Keep your cell phone with you at all times  
d. All of the above

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE TITLE:** SAFETY & THE POWER OF YOUR INTUITION

**SCHOOL:** Basics & Beyond Real Estate Institute

**INSTRUCTOR:** Linda Ponce **DELIVERY METHOD:** Distance Education

<b>Please check your answer to each question</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Did you receive a copy of the course curriculum/objectives?		
Did the course content conform with the published description?		
Did you read the material in the booklet on this date?		
Did you complete the quiz for the course & use the enclosed answer sheet?		
Did you complete this course evaluation & sign the form below?		

Why did you choose to take this course? Circle all that apply: Topic Time Cost Ease or Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Course (5 being excellent, 1 being poor)</b>	<b>Exc</b>				<b>Poor</b>
How useful was the information acquired from this course?	5	4	3	2	1
How current was the information presented?	5	4	3	2	1
How would you rate the organization of the information?	5	4	3	2	1
How would you rate the quality of the materials used?	5	4	3	2	1
What is your overall evaluation of this course?	5	4	3	2	1

<b>DELIVERY METHOD (DISTANCE EDUC)</b>	<b>ANSWERS</b>
How many hours did it take you to finish the course?	
Was your assessment of your clock hours inclusive of homework assignments? If yes, then break down the seat time.	
Did the course have periodic measures of time spent and progression towards completion?	
Did the delivery method allow interactivity with an instructor? Was the instructor available?	
Additional comments about the course, instructor or delivery method	

Would you take another correspondence course from Basics & Beyond Real Estate Institute? Yes/No Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your signature Date

To file a complaint regarding any education issues, you can download the Education Complain Form from [www.dol.wa.gov/forms/620013.htm](http://www.dol.wa.gov/forms/620013.htm)  
**DISCLAIMER:** No denial of full continuing education credit for the subject course may occur as a result of completing this evaluation form.