

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

KNOW YOUR LOCAL SAFETY RESOURCES

Regardless of where you live and work, your number one resource for local safety information is your local police department. Here are five ways you can enlist your local police to help you keep your agents safe:

1. Ask for an in-house safety presentation.

Call the nearest police station and ask for the public education officer or safety education officer. Ask that person if the department can schedule a presentation for your office to address personal and professional safety. Schedule a time when all your agents can attend. Note that the police may need some time and input to customize a presentation for you, but the police can help educate your agents about general and specific dangers, and give them some concrete advice for avoiding those dangers.

2. Ask if they can provide agent safety information.

Some police departments provide safety information specific to real estate professionals. You'll find valuable tips for our industry on the Web sites of the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana (www.brgov.com/dept/brpd/safety.htm) and Eugene, Oregon (www.eugene-or.gov and search on "Realty Personal Safety Guidelines"), to name a few. (See the "Safety Resources" handout online for more.) Perhaps your police department is also interested in educating real estate professionals on specific safety issues. Once you've contacted your public education officer, ask if your local police department is interested in posting or providing similar information.

3. Ask if they can make a commitment to keep your agents safe.

Establish a relationship with your local police department with the first two steps listed here. Once they understand your commitment to the safety of your agents, ask them if they can, on request, have a squad car drive by scheduled open houses. You might also ask if an officer can perform a safety evaluation of your office building and make any recommendations for making it more secure such as replacing locks or installing bars on windows.

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4. Ask that they share information on any relevant local crimes.

Once you have placed agent safety at the forefront of your police representative's mind, ask if he or she can let you know as soon as possible if any crimes are committed against real estate professionals in your community. Criminals often repeat their behavior, whether is robbing a lone real estate agent in a vacant property or even rape or murder. The sooner it you know that something, even something minor, has happened to a real estate professional in your area, the sooner you can alert your own agents to a specific danger.

5. Ask the fire department for help.

Check with your local fire department to find out what guidance and education they can provide for your office. They may assist you with fire drills and evacuation drills that are appropriate for your office setting.

5. Check with local colleagues.

Meet weekly or monthly with your own co-workers and other area brokers and agents to discuss business and safety issues. Share any concerns and news, such as harassing phone calls or suspicious-seeming clients.

Know Your Community

In addition to working directly with your local police and fire departments, there are ways to stay informed on what's happening in your town. Make it a goal to learn about crimes as they occur and share this information with everyone in your office. You'll all be able to stay alert to trends in theft and burglary, personal attacks, and vandalism. Information sources include:

- Your local paper may have a "police blotter" section that lists recent arrests.
- Neighborhood watch groups and crime-buster groups usually know everything that happens in a specific neighborhood. If you can't find a group like this in your area, ask the police department for the closest one. You can also start your own.
- Many local police departments have Web sites that list recent crimes and arrests.
- Join your chamber of commerce and network with other businesspeople.
- Your state or local REALTOR® Association may provide this information, Check their Web site and if they don't have a news section, contact them about adding one.