

**SECTION 3: SAFETY WITH CLIENTS****SAFETY AT PROPERTY SHOWINGS**

When meeting a client alone, you can minimize your risk by adopting these safety precautions:

- When you have a new client, ask him/her to stop by your office and complete a Prospect Identification Form (an example of this form is online at [www.REALTOR.org/Safety](http://www.REALTOR.org/Safety)), preferably in the presence of an associate. Get the client's car make and license number.
- Call references and verify their employment and current address, and retain this information at your office.
- Check county property records to confirm the ownership of a property before you go to a listing appointment or approach a for-sale-by-owner listing. The more information you have, the easier and faster it is for police to catch a perpetrator if you become a victim.
- 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 and when you will be back; leave the name and phone number of the client you are meeting.
- Have a check-out employee board at work, listing your name, destination, customer name, date and expected return time.
- Never list a property as "vacant." This is an open invitation to criminals.
- Show properties before dark. If you are going to be working after hours, advise your associate or first-line supervisor of your schedule. If you must show a property after dark, turn on all lights as you go through, and don't lower any shades or draw curtains or blinds.
- Be sure to use the lockbox property-key procedure that has been established to improve real estate agent safety. A reliable, secure lockbox system such as those made by REALTOR Benefits® Program partner Sentrilock ([www.sentrilock.com](http://www.sentrilock.com)) ensures that keys don't fall into the wrong hands.
- Try and call the office once an hour to let people know where you are.

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**SECTION 3: SAFETY WITH CLIENTS      Safety at Property Showings CONT.,**

- If you think it may be some time before a property sells (and you may, therefore, be showing it often), get acquainted with a few of the immediate neighbors. You will feel better knowing they know your vehicle, and they will feel better about the stranger (you) who frequently visits their neighborhood.
- Establish a distress code, a secret word or phrase that is not commonly used but can be worked into any conversation for cases where you feel that you are in danger. Use this if the person you are with can overhear the conversation, but you don't want to alarm them. The distress code could be something as simple as "Hi, this is Jane. I'm at [address]. Could you e-mail me the red file?" You can make up your own distress code, i.e. DOG FOOD (when you don't have a dog) or I'm going to MAYDAY Lane (and there is no Mayday Lane). The distress code should be used if you are uneasy, but do not feel you are in danger. If you are in immediate danger – stop the car and leave the area, or jump out of the car at the next stop. Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1. See the "Protect Yourself with a Distress Code System" handout for more information.
- Preview the property and don't go into a neighborhood that you perceive as unsafe. Be familiar with the area so you know the location of the nearest police station. Drive there immediately if you feel you are in danger.
- In showing a property, always leave the front door unlocked for a quick exit while you and the client are inside. As you enter each room, stand near the door.
- Prepare a scenario so that you can leave, or encourage someone who makes you uncomfortable to leave. Examples: Your cell phone or beeper went off and you have to call your office, you left some important information in your car, or another agent with buyers is on his way.
- It is better to not display purses while at a property. Lock your purse in the car trunk before you arrive. Carry only non-valuable business items (except for your cell phone), and do not wear expensive jewelry or watches, or appear to be carrying large sums of money.
- Park at the curb in front of the property rather than in the driveway. You will attract much more attention running and screaming to the curb area. It is much easier to escape in your vehicle if you don't have to back out of a driveway. Besides, parked in a driveway, another vehicle could purposefully or accidentally trap you.

*(Sources: Louisiana REALTORS® Association; Washington Real Estate Safety Council; City of Albuquerque, NM; City of Mesa, AZ)*