

# OPEN HOUSES



## SECTION 2: SAFETY ON THE JOB

### Safety at Open Houses

An open house can be a great sales tool, but it also exposes you to numerous unfamiliar people for the first time. Stay safe by practicing these guidelines.

- Never list a property as “vacant.” This is an open invitation to criminals.
- If possible, always try to have at least one other person working with you at the open house.
- Check your cell phone’s strength and signal prior to the open house. Have emergency numbers programmed on speed dial, and keep your phone with you at all times.
- Upon entering a house for the first time, check all rooms 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 the back door, you could 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.
- You should have an office policy regarding sign in sheets for all prospects. Ask each visitor to sign in with their full name, address, phone number and e-mail.
- Use today’s technology to your advantage. Use your cell phone camera to take a snapshot of your client, knowing you want to be able to remember them personally. This can also be used to identify a criminal.
- When showing the house, always walk behind the prospect. Direct them; don’t lead them. Say, for example, “The kitchen is on your left,” and gesture for them to go ahead of you.
- Avoid attics, basements, and getting trapped in small rooms.

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- Communicate frequently with the office, or family. Notify someone when you are at the property or when you are leaving. Be sure your client hears you tell someone that you are leaving the property and will be home in 10 minutes.
- Inform a neighbor that you will be showing the house and ask if he or 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 an open house. Check all of the rooms and the backyard prior to locking the doors. Be prepared to defend yourself, if necessary.

If you are showing model homes, here are some tips that can help keep you safe:

- If possible, always try to have at least one other person working with you at the home.
- When a person comes through the office to view a model home, have them complete a guest register that includes their full name, address, phone number, e-mail, and vehicle information.
- Keep your cell phone and your car keys with you at all times. Keep your handbag locked in the trunk of your vehicle.
- When closing the model homes for the night, never assume that the home is vacant. Check the interior of the house prior to locking the doors, working from the top floor to the bottom, back of the house to the front, locking the doors behind you. Be familiar enough with each home to know the exits. Be aware of your surroundings. Be prepared to protect yourself.

*(Sources: Washington Real Estate Safety Council; City of Mesa, AZ; Georgia Real Estate Commission)*