SECTION 2: SAFETY AT WORK

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.

- 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 the open house. Have emergency numbers programmed on speed dial. Carry an extra, fully charged cell phone battery.
- 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.
- Once inside, turn on the lights and open the curtains. These are not only sound safety procedures, but also great marketing tactics.
- 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.
- When prospects begin to arrive, jot down their car descriptions, license numbers and physical descriptions.
- 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.
- 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 notify the police immediately.
- 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.

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- 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 three tips that can help keep you safe:

- When a person comes through the office to view a model home, have them complete a guest register that includes making a copy of their driver's license. Immediately fax their information back to the main office.
- Keep your cell phone and your car keys with you at all times. Keep your handbag locked in the trunk of your vehicle rather than in your desk.
- When closing the model home 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, Arizona; Pinehurst North Carolina Police Department