

Safety at Open Houses

An open house can be a great sales tool, but it also exposes you to numerous unfamiliar people at once. Take these steps to stay safe:

1. If possible, always try to have at least one other person working with you at the open house.
2. Call the local police department and ask them to have a squad car drive by during your open-house hours.
3. Check your cell phone's strength and signal prior to the open house. Have emergency numbers programmed on speed dial.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Have all open house visitors sign in. Ask for full name, address, phone number and e-mail.
8. When showing a 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.
9. Avoid attics, basements, and getting trapped in small rooms.
10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

(Sources: Washington Real Estate Safety Council; City of Mesa, Arizona; Pinehurst North Carolina Police Department, Nevada County Board of REALTORS[®]; Georgia Real Estate Commission)

This article is part of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS[®] 2007 REALTOR[®] Safety Week Kit.