

THINK  
SELL SAFE

HOW SAFE ARE YOU?

**ECAR Safety  
Best Practices**



*Produced by the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors*

*Source: Georgia Association of Realtors*



## Know Who You Are Dealing With

*When you have new clients or customers...*

### **Meet in the office**

Ask the prospect to stop by the office and complete the Prospect Identification Form before going to the property. This should be openly obtained consistently throughout the organization and preferably in the presence of another associate in your office. Allowing another person to meet the prospect in the office can be a deterrent because would-be assailants do not like to be noticed or receive exposure knowing a person could pick them out in a police line-up.



Always ask questions to pre-qualify the client.

When listing a property, take measures to identify the person you are meeting to be sure he or she is the property owner.

When showing a listing identify who you are working with.

### **Verify his or her identity**

Identify the person you are working with. Call and verify references, or place of employment and verify his or her current address. Information should be retained at your office. Requiring this information might detain or discourage an assailant.

### **Get the car make and license number**

Believe it or not, the client may be driving a stolen car. If the car is stolen, your prospect will be reluctant to give you this information. Requiring this information will assist law enforcement in catching the criminal or locating you if you are abducted.

### **Photocopy the driver's license**

Legitimate clients do not mind your photocopying their driver's license. If showing our license is required to rent a movie, we can expect identification from our clients before showing a home worth thousands of dollars.

### **Company use of the Prospect Identification Form**

You can never be too safe in collecting enough information about the people who are prospective customers. Create a company policy that includes an identification process regarding the identity of clients and customers.



## Personal Marketing

*Your marketing materials should be polished and professional without compromising safety*

### **Limit the amount of personal information you provide**

Do not give your personal home address on your business cards. Always provide a cell phone or business phone number, not a home number.

### **Giving too much of the wrong information can make you a target**

Concentrate on your professional proficiency rather than personal information in newspapers, resumes and business cards and web sites.

### **Be careful of the personal information you share verbally as well**

“Getting to know your client” does not need to include personal information about your children or where you live. Be guarded with your personal information.

### **Avoid glamour shots**

Criminals actually circle photographs of their would-be victims in newspaper ads, and target those victims because of their appearance in the photograph.

### **Dress for safety**

Look professional, but wear clothes that are comfortable and shoes you can run in. Don't wear expensive jewelry or flash cash, as this can make you a target. Save flashy jewelry for formal occasions. Criminals scout real estate agents and homes for jewelry, prescription drugs and items that are easy to sell.

### **Dress for the weather**

If your car breaks down or you need to escape dangerous situations on foot, you could find yourself exposed to the weather for an extended period of time. In the winter bring a coat and always keep comfortable shoes and a blanket in your car.

### **Internet/Website Advertising**

This is a perfect way for someone to learn all about you and your business. Be careful what information you share on your web site. There are securities from your Internet provider and web host that can allow your personal information to be protected. If you are not familiar with Internet issues, take a class or seek advice from an expert. There are many free or low cost programs that will show you who is tracking your web site.

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## **Advertising**

When creating ads to sell property, it is very important to choose your words wisely. Saying that a house is vacant for any reason, even with the best of intentions, is an immediate attraction to those who are looking for easy prey.

Be aware of how you self-promote to the public. Your listing presentation should include accolades regarding designations and further professional education you have pursued, but use caution when sharing personal facts about yourself and your family.

## **Danger Is Not Always Easy to Identify**

Don't ignore danger signals:

- ◆ Intuition
- ◆ Unexplained fear
- ◆ Apprehension

These are signals that something isn't right. Safety experts agree that it is best to assume that your instincts are right and to take the necessary precautions. Do not be so anxious for a sale that you ignore your own intuition in the heat of the moment.

Always trust your gut.  
It knows what  
your head hasn't  
yet figured out.

A few things to assist you in situations are:

### **Know the property**

Have knowledge of the property including location of all the exit doors, garage doors and basement exits. Always have a game plan in place to know what to do.

### **Plan your escape route**

Before you show the property, plan an escape route.

### **Position yourself in an escape mode**

When you show a house or other property by yourself, pay close attention to your instincts. Do not lead the way; it is too easy to be cornered or trapped in a room, basement or attic. You can comment on each room from the safety of the door, from where you can flee more easily if you get a bad feeling about the situation.



## **Car Safety**

- ◆ Always have your keys with you
- ◆ Park in a well-lit area
- ◆ Don't allow yourself to get blocked in a driveway; if necessary park on the road. Ask yourself: in an emergency will I be able to run to my car and drive away?
- ◆ Beware of dead end streets
- ◆ Keep your car in good running condition
- ◆ Consider using separate cars
- ◆ Never allow the client to drive you to the location

You spend a lot of time in your car. This, in itself, increases your likelihood of running out of gas, mechanical failure, or an accident. Make sure you have a fully charged cell phone, tools, blanket, flares, first aid kit, and warm clothes in your car.

## **Open House/On-Site Safety**

### **Arrive early to an open house**

Familiarize yourself with the property. Survey the exits and establish escape routes from each level. Make sure all the deadbolts are unlocked to facilitate a faster escape. Double check the backyard to make sure you can get past the fence if necessary. Meet the neighbors in the adjacent houses and inform them you will be at the open house next door. They can be your best ally. They will be more alert to unusual sounds and you will have someone to run to if you need assistance.

Avoid attics, basements, and getting trapped in small rooms. Let prospects lead the way in to all rooms.

Remind sellers to put their valuables and prescription drugs in safe secure places. Do not leave your briefcase, purse or laptop sitting on the counter.

Be aware of suspicious behavior and your surroundings.

Always carry your cell phone and keys on you. This can be your best defense.

Place one of your business cards, with the date and time on the back in a cabinet or on the counter. When prospects begin arriving at the house, jot down their car description, license plate number if possible, and a physical description of each person. This will assist you in remembering names as well.

You should have an office policy regarding sign in sheets for all prospects. You could use the prospect identification form in the Safety Section of the ECAR website.

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# THINK SELL SAFE



## Communication

Know in advance whom you are going to call when:

- ◆ Your instincts tell you to get help
- ◆ You are just a little bit nervous
- ◆ You need help at an open house

Communicate frequently with the office or family. Notify someone when you are at the property or when you are leaving the property. Be sure your client hears you tell someone that you are leaving the property and will be home in ten minutes.

Keep your cell phone on you and charged at all times. Make sure you tell someone where you are going, with whom you are going, and when you will be back. Whenever possible, make sure the client knows you have shared this information with someone. You are less likely to be attacked if the criminal knows you will be missed and he or she can be identified.

Use the Agent Itinerary Form to communicate with office staff. If your client is with you as you leave the office, make a show of sharing this information with someone. This form can assist police in finding you. Victims can be missing for days before co-workers begin to worry, unless you communicate where you are going and when you should return. You can find the Agent Itinerary form in the safety section of the ECAR website.

If you work alone, consider telling your buddy or a family member when to expect you back. Even leave a note on your desk that could help authorities in locating you in an emergency situation.

Use today's technology to your advantage. Cell phones come with cameras. Take a snap shot of your client, knowing you want to be able to remember them personally. This can also be used to identify the criminal. This one step alone can be the greatest tool for the authorities.

Authorities agree that most rapists and thieves are looking for easy targets. Be assertive and leave dangerous situations immediately. Do not be afraid to stop at a gas station if you feel you are in danger with clients in your car. Leave the situation. A car can be replaced, a life cannot.

Know your company procedures for distress codes. Alert your office, colleagues, family and friends of the "distress code".

*Share your itinerary with someone in the office or with your family —  
and make sure your prospect knows that you have shared it*



## Commercial/Industrial Sales & Property Management

*Property management could possibly be one of the most dangerous real estate careers. You are technically showing a vacant property to a prospective customer. Be aware of several things:*

### **Communication plays a vital role in showing vacant property**

Know who you are dealing with. Insist that you have information recorded both at the office and with you about the client.

### **Be sure your cell phone has service in the area you are showing the property**

### **When the property is vacant be aware of the time of day you are showing it**

Showing a property at dusk, with no electricity on in the space you are showing, is setting yourself up for trouble.

### **Screen all prospective clients before showing the property**

Use your intuition. When uneasy, have someone tag along or do not show the property.

### **Have policies in place regarding rental collection and disposition of a property**

All of the real estate safety practices are applicable in commercial sales and property management, and are even more relevant since you are usually dealing with vacant locations.

Be sure you review all the safety awareness procedures and implement the best measures to provide protection from assailants.

## Office Safety

Each office should have certain security measures in place to assist agents in safety awareness.

Use the safety resources available in the Safety section of the ECAR website. There are many valuable tips, forms and links to provide you with the latest safety resources. Use the recommended forms for every client. Be sure that clients are not stereotyped and this step is not overlooked.

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## Forms

The following forms are available on the ECAR website for use by your office:

### Prospect Identification Form

Know who you are doing business with! Offices across the nation are now asking for photo identification and information from clients BEFORE going to show a property. The form is quick and easy to fill out and asks for name, address, employer, and automobile information. We ask to prequalify clients for a loan; we must also prequalify them to show property. Not only does this procedure identify the person you are working with, it helps to qualify a prospect and aids police if something does happen to you. This is a simple form and it may be the best preventive safety measure you and your office can take. Legitimate customers are very understanding of why you need this information. There will be little to no resistance to providing identification if they are truly interested in buying or selling a house. If a customer does object, that in itself should raise a red flag.

### Agent Identification Form

If there were an accident or an agent did not check in when he or she was scheduled, you or the police would need this information quickly. We recommend placing the Agent Identification Form collectively in a separate folder that anyone can access. This needs to be updated at least once a year. You may want to schedule an annual review of the information along with the time of year that goals and business planning are reviewed. It may seem a trivial thing, but this form can be a valuable tool to all parties involved when something tragic occurs.

### Agent Itinerary Form

This simple form helps you find an agent when there is a problem at home and gives you a place to look when an agent is missing. Many agents print out an additional "show list" and attach the form to it. Your office will appreciate having this information if they need to contact you.

### Office Safety Action Form

This is an editable, customizable form that your office can use to make sure all staff are on the same page with safety procedures and expectations for the office.

This is just a short list of forms that can be used to provide a safer environment for your agents. Other things to consider are tracking of clients who attend open houses, or on site tours.

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## **Procedures**

Each office should have the following procedures in place, to help ensure the safety of its agents:

### Buddy System

We strongly encourage all agents to have both a virtual and live Buddy. There are several free apps that can act as a virtual buddy for REALTORS® who are working alone. These apps provide a panic button that will connect REALTORS to police, and allows them to select several guardians, including friends and colleagues, that can stay in contact with them during vulnerable situations. The safety section of the ECAR website has links to several excellent safety apps for this purpose.

Each office should also have a live buddy system in place, connecting agents with other agents in the office, so that they work alone as little as possible.

### Distress Code

In addition, your office should implement and practice an office distress signal process. Each agent should know in advance who they will call and what code they will use when they feel they are in any danger or need help.

### Other Procedures

In addition to using the safety forms, buddy system and distress code, your office is strongly encouraged to implement the following:

- ◆ Office Check in Policies
- ◆ A system for entering and exiting the building when dropping off contracts after office hours

## **Fight or Flight?**

When faced with danger, trust yourself to stay as calm as possible. Think rationally and evaluate your options. There is no right or wrong way to respond to confrontation, because each one is different. The response depends on the circumstances, location of the attack, your personal recourses, the characteristics of the assailant, and the presence of weapons. There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your own judgment to choose the best one:

- ◆ No Resistance
- ◆ Stalling for Time
- ◆ Distraction and then Flight
- ◆ Verbal Assertiveness
- ◆ Physical Resistance

Make a conscience effort to get an accurate description of your attacker(s). Even the smallest details may give authorities a clue in finding the suspect.