

12 Tips for Holding a Safe Open House

Open houses can be a great sales tool—but hosting one also exposes you to numerous unfamiliar people for the first time. **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. **Check your cell phone's strength and signal** prior to the open house. Have **emergency numbers** programmed on speed dial.
3. Upon entering a house for the first time, **check all rooms** and determine several "escape" routes.
4. **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.
5. Have all **open house visitors sign in**. Ask for full name, address, phone number and e-mail.
6. 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.
7. **Avoid attics, basements, and getting trapped** in small rooms.
8. **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.
9. **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.
10. **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.
11. **Remind homeowners to protect themselves from crime by securing or removing:** Jewelry and other valuables, money, credit cards, documents such as passports, social security cards, prescription drugs, extra keys and garage door openers, family photos, and items labeled with children's names.
12. **Be careful and stay alert to your surroundings.** If you sense any suspicious activity during the open house (or showing), contact your local Police Department to report this.

Sources for Tips 1-10: Washington Real Estate Safety Council; City of Mesa, Arizona; Nevada County Board of REALTORS®; Georgia Real Estate Commission. This article is part of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® REALTOR® Safety Resources Kit.



Six (6) Tips for Safe and Secure Showings

Reminders for Listing Agents:

- When assigning a lockbox to a new listing, be sure to **change the access code from factory default settings** to something that is **secure**.
- **Showing appointments setup through ShowingTime™ for the MLS** help to ensure lockbox codes are being shared with authorized parties. Before providing a lockbox code to another agent over the phone, we suggest you call them back at their office (or another number) that can be verified as theirs through the MLS system.
- Lockbox codes should only be shared with other REALTORS® or those authorized according to your seller. **These codes should never be shared with members of the public per Realcomp's MLS policies.** This infraction is fineable by \$5,000.

Reminders for Showing Agents:

- If unauthorized, unaccompanied (by a REALTOR®) individuals are found to be **trespassing** at a listing, **call the police**.
- **Secure the property** by shutting and locking all doors and windows before leaving. Be sure to put the key back in the lockbox *(if applicable)* and **leave the property the way you found it**.
- **If you've printed any showing instructions that contain the lockbox code, be sure to properly dispose of them.**

Source: Realcomp II Ltd.