

Brainstorming Ideas
Conducting Open Houses and Developing a Safety Plan
September 23, 2008
CE RE36RC05

In a lively interactive brainstorming session exploring three (3) separate open house or showing scenarios, class participants answered a variety of questions. Some of those questions included the following:

- *What is the intent of the open house?*
- *What are your expectations? The Sellers?*
- *How will you handle multiple visitors?*
- *Will you require positive identification?*
- *What will you do in case of emergency? If you feel unsafe?*
- *How will you ensure the Sellers' belongings remain safe?*

Condo open house suggestions:

- Contact the association liaison at the management company to let them know you're having an open house- goes a long way in establishing the relationship and your representation skills as well as to add another level of safety awareness
- Depending on location of the unit, have three people do the open house: (1) greeter, (1) escort, and (1) inside the unit. Two-way radio ability is essential.
- Call Seller both before and after the open house to ensure your safety, the security of the home, and to let the Seller know of any specific information. You may even want to have them call you once or twice during the open house to check on you.

General open house suggestions:

- Evaluate the risk/reward ratio of doing an open house on this property! An open house is not effective for every property. Carefully evaluate your intent and expectations, as well as those of the Seller
- Invite a loan officer to be with you at the open house
- Ask for positive identification and write down all car make, model, and registration information
- Advertise a period of time during which "pre-registered parties" may visit the property provided they bring a qualified lender's pre-approval letter (on company letterhead)

General open house suggestions (cont.)

- Explore the option of a “Notification of Risk” policy that your attorney could draft on behalf of your company. The intent of the notification is to create a tangible awareness of the risks to life and property at an open house. Although a waiver may not be either legal or advised, the discussion alone will be a valuable sales tool
- Prior to any open house, encourage the Sellers to take dated and timed-stamped digital photographs of any and all items of value for insurance and liability purposes
- Ensure that the Sellers’ home owners’ insurance as well as liability insurance is current and sufficient to cover any loss or accident while on the property
- Ensure that your office and personal liability insurance coverage is current and adequate in the event of loss or accident
- Be careful of interior photos online, i.e. children’s rooms that clearly show the name of the child, or photos that identify where doorways and egresses are located. Walk around the property prior to the open house to ensure all windows, doors, gates, and methods of entrance or egress are secure

General showing advice:

- Invest in a Supra Key and keypad so as to electronically track
- Pre-program your cell phone with all emergency numbers on speed dial
- Program your ICE...In Case of Emergency contact information...on speed dial on your cell phone
- Include in all your listing packets a checklist for all Sellers to assist them in safeguarding valuables and medications
- Always use an Agent Itinerary Form that tracks agent’s whereabouts...and always let someone know when you’re expected!
- Carry a flashlight with you in your car at all times
- Check your cell reception immediately upon arrival at the property. If there is little or no reception, carry the Seller’s cordless phone with you during the showing. Let the Seller know that this will help to ensure your safety...they won’t mind. Remind them to keep the cordless phone charged for the open house
- Don’t forget your car alarm! Carry your car keys with you. Use the car alarm if you need it.
- Take extra precautions when showing property after dark: take a buddy, make sure someone knows where you’ll be and when you’ll be back; always let them go first, no attics or basements, don’t get blocked in when parking your car, meet them at the office first, and always be prepared with a code word or phrase if you feel threatened. Make sure your “buddy” knows the code or phrase and what to do when they hear it. PRACTICE!
- Notify the local police department when you list a vacant property.

General showing advice:

- If the home has a security system, know how to trigger a remote notification of distress
- Always get a contact number to reach the potential client. Check the number on www.whitepages.com , www.switchboard.com , www.anywho.com , or any of the public sites confirming identity
- Watch your advertising! Don't give those who want to do harm the opportunity by offering TOO much information.
- NAR and local/state associations to collaborate on developing a piece we can give to Sellers to inform them of the dangers to life and property at an open house.
- Consider self-defense training

Our discussion went far beyond the suggestions you see here. Please log onto www.marealtor.com , www.realtor.org , and www.warealtor.org/safety (The Real Estate Safety Council's website) for additional materials and ideas.