

# It's Realtor Safety Month. Here's how to protect yourself and clients

Find out how to lead with safety in every transaction and protect buyers, sellers, FSBOs and yourself from crime with security specialist Tracey Hawkins



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In the real estate industry, trust and expertise go hand-in-hand. With the recent National Association of Realtors (NAR) commission settlement reshaping how agents operate, it's more crucial than ever for real estate professionals to differentiate themselves. One of the most effective ways to do this is by focusing on safety, which impacts sellers, buyers and even for-sale-by-owner (FSBO) clients.

September marks Realtor Safety Month, a time to spotlight how real estate agents can protect their clients and, in the process, demonstrate their value in a rapidly changing market. From listing presentations to buyer agreements, real estate professionals have a unique opportunity to lead with safety and security.

## **Seller safety: Protecting homes while listed**

When a seller lists their home, safety should be top of mind. During listing presentations, agents can go beyond the basics by offering a comprehensive home safety and security assessment. Start by walking through the property and identifying potential risks.

The listing appointment can be a time for agents to stand out and show their concern for the homeowner. Lydia Hedrick, a Realtor with LIME Realty in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, said, “I go over physical safety for the home when preparing sellers for showings. I recommend they check doors, windows and garage doors to ensure they are locked after a day of showings.”

Here are actionable tips to keep sellers and their property safe:

- **Secure valuables:** Remove personal items such as jewelry, cash, weapons and prescription medications before showings. Sellers should consider storing these items in a safe or secure location.
- **Limit access:** Use a lockbox with a secure code for agents, and make sure it is locked after each showing. Advise sellers never to allow anyone into their home directly; always direct them to the lockbox.
- **Monitor visitors:** Encourage sellers to use security cameras or smart doorbells to monitor activity. This protects the property and provides peace of mind.
- **Protect personal information:** Sellers should remove personal documents, photos and any information that could reveal sensitive details about their identity.

As an expert in real estate safety, I advise agents to incorporate these safety measures into every listing presentation. Offering this value upfront shows sellers that you’re invested in more than just selling their home — you’re invested in their well-being.

## **Buyer safety: Starting with the buyer agreement**

Buyer safety begins with the very first conversation, and in the wake of the NAR commission settlement, agents are now required to have buyers sign an agreement before showing homes.

Jabari Mack, broker and salesperson at The Real Estate House in Lee’s Summit, Missouri, says, “Agents should always protect their buyer’s personal information and ensure buyers that the real estate agent’s office practices proper data security measures.”

Here are key safety tips agents should share during the buyer consultation:

- **Wait for your agent:** Hedrick advises her buyers to wait if they arrive at a property before her. “I tell my buyers they should never enter a home without me present. This ensures they are not walking into unsafe or unknown situations.”
- **Research neighborhood safety:** Because agents cannot legally provide specific crime data, direct your clients to resources like local police departments or online crime maps. This empowers them to make informed decisions about the areas they’re considering. Mack tells agents to encourage their buyers to “drive around neighborhoods of interest in the evening. This allows buyers to get a feel for the area when neighbors are home. These precautions help protect their interests and ensure a smoother, safer homebuying process.”
- **Protect financial information:** Warn buyers about the increasing prevalence of wire fraud and scams.

According to CertifID’s 2024 State of Wire Fraud, 60 percent of consumers said that agents and other real estate professionals did not warn them of possible fraud.

“Agents should advise buyers and sellers that they should never wire funds without double-checking with the title company or the agent, to ensure that the instructions are correct. Call and verify,” Mack tells agents.

By starting these conversations early, agents can position themselves as trusted advisors, protecting not only the buyers’ financial interests but also their physical safety.

### **FSBO safety: Protecting sellers who go it alone**

FSBO sellers often underestimate the risks of showing their home without professional help. Scammers frequently target these sellers, taking advantage of their lack of experience.

Here’s how agents can approach FSBOs with safety in mind:

- **Educate on screening buyers:** Explain the risks of allowing unvetted individuals into their homes. Professional agents ensure that potential buyers are pre-screened and accompanied by a licensed real estate agent.
- **Highlight the risk of scams:** FSBOs often fall victim to real estate fraud because they are unaware of the red flags. Agents can advise on spotting fraudulent activity, such as fake buyers or illegitimate offers. In the age of generative AI, this becomes more difficult with the proliferation of deep fakes and phishing emails.

- **Encourage secure showings:** Advise FSBO sellers to use secure lockboxes and avoid meeting potential buyers alone.

As a real estate expert, I've seen firsthand how FSBOs can become vulnerable to fraud and theft. By educating them about the risks, agents can build trust and show the value of professional representation, even if FSBOs initially reject hiring an agent.

### **Warn about scams**

Agents should be up-to-date on real estate scams and frauds, and they should create content to educate and warn consumers.

"I advise consumers to be very cautious of scams. Carefully analyze every email related to your transaction to ensure the authenticity. I want them to contact me if they have questions," Hedrick said.

### **Leading with safety in every transaction**

September is Realtor Safety Month, a timely reminder that safety should be at the forefront of every transaction. Whether you're working with sellers, buyers or FSBOs, the message is the same: Prioritizing safety builds trust and demonstrates value.

Agents can differentiate themselves from the competition by offering safety and security assessments, guiding buyers through safe practices, and educating FSBOs about the risks of selling without representation.

### **A strong call to action**

As an agent, it's time to lead with safety and security. In an era where buyers are now required to sign agreements before showings and FSBOs are navigating uncharted waters, your expertise in keeping clients safe is more valuable than ever.

**Take action:** Incorporate safety into your consultations, make it a core part of your value proposition, and educate clients on protecting themselves. By doing so, you not only provide a valuable service but also build long-lasting relationships rooted in trust. In today's real estate environment, safety isn't just a consideration — it's a competitive advantage.

Let's lead with safety, one client at a time.