

10 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. Make sure all deadbolt locks are unlocked to facilitate a faster escape.
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.

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

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