

STAY SAFE



& SELL

11 WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

TRY THESE
TECH TOOLS TO
SAFEGUARD
YOURSELF AND
YOUR BUSINESS

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Over the last few years, technology has been developed that can keep you safer. From protecting personal information and vetting potential customers to reducing the risk during showings, knowing how to leverage modern technology for safety is essential.

Here are some strategies to consider:

SAFEGUARD PERSONAL INFORMATION. Given the increasing pressure to put yourself out there for marketing purposes, it's easy to lose sight of the importance of safeguarding your personal information against identity theft, blackmail or worse. Consider these ideas:

- **Keep your personal and professional identities separate.** On social media, for example, your professional profile should be publicly accessible and include only the information and images neces-

sary for business—office location, business phone numbers and email addresses, professional affiliations, etc.

- **Max out the privacy settings on your personal profile to safeguard yourself and your family members.** Even if you don't include personal information in your profile, much can be gleaned from photos, check-ins and mutual friends.

- **Invest in an identity theft monitoring service such as LifeLock, ID Watchdog or IdentityForce.** These services warn you when your personal information has been compromised.

VET POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS.

You can greatly enhance your safety when meeting new customers by using technology in these ways to get to know your potential buyer or seller before you meet:

- **Check court records.** If you have a customer's first and last name as well

as the names of the U.S. counties he or she has lived in and when, you can check court records online for free.

- **Check their online presence.**

Search, via Google, the person's social media networks, business websites or appearances in the news. Link with or friend the person on social media (from your professional profile only) at the beginning of your interaction. Look for any indications of association with shady or illegal practices or organizations. Note any apparent mismatch between the potential customers' career and economic circumstances and their stated interest in your services.

- **Consider investing in an online background check service such as Intelius or BeenVerified.** Note that this is an extreme measure, and you'll need to get the person's permission before running such a check.

TAKE STEPS BEFORE SHOWINGS.

It's always valuable to meet a potential buyer or seller at your office first. If that's not possible, consider these ideas to collect information on the person:

- **Gather data digitally.** Before meeting for a showing, ask the customer to text or email a photo of him- or herself. Also ask for a copy of the person's driver's license, a description of his or her current car and its license plate number. The stated purpose is to ensure you can identify the customer. Having this information filed can be helpful to law enforcement should something happen. Store it in the customer's file at the office.

- **Take a selfie.** Upon arrival at each property, take a selfie with the customer in front of the property and immediately post it on social media with a geo tag. Caption it with "Showing this great property to this great customer!" This not only shows people who you're with, but also where you are.

REDUCE RISK AT OPEN HOUSES.

Many times, real estate professionals end up alone in the house, leaving them open to potential crime. Consider these tech tools to stay safe:

- **Set up cameras.** Inexpensive, portable webcams can be set up prominently in the rooms most vulnerable to theft and vandalism.

- **Bring Alexa.** There are new Amazon Alexa skills that allow you to use voice commands to call for help.

Safety Applications for Smartphones

Bmonitored! (*bmonitored.com*)

allows you to enter a meeting start time and safety alert times. Bmonitored will then ask for confirmation that you are safe at the interval you have selected.

Price: Free



Homesnap Pro

(*homesnap.com/pro*) allows agents to set a safety timer when they go to a showing with an unfamiliar customer.

Price: Free



LifeLine Response

(*llresponse.com*) is a patent-protected personal safety mobile app that uses natural human reaction to respond to emergency situations.

Price: \$45 Annual subscription



CurbCall (*curbcall.com/protect*)

Simply press a single "Begin Showing" button, and CurbCall automatically sends an SMS text alert to your emergency contacts letting them know you're on a showing with a map of your precise location.

Price: Free



Source: <https://www.nar.realtor/safety/resources-for-members>

Get Educated

Brush Up on Safety Skills

The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) recently approved Course Number 0020315, Personal Protection for Realtors® (3 CE Credits). This mental and physical personal protection course teaches general self-defense mindset, awareness and tactics and shows how these apply to specific real estate situations.

The course involves moderate physical activity, which students can approach at their own pace. Check with your local real estate board to see when it can offer this course at a convenient location.

- **Have visitors sign in.** Use a program such as ShowingTime and Open Home Pro to have visitors enter their information on a tablet computer as they arrive.

Remember, relying on technology is not a complete approach to safety—cellular service can be intermittent, GPS devices can fail, not all potential customers will have an online presence. Be prepared and have a plan in case technology fails (e.g., know how to navigate by paper map, know where commercial establishments with land lines are located and learn personal

safety skills).

Technology can help, but in the end, you are responsible for your own safety. #

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