

## Safety Practices Protect Home Sellers During Open House



Selling your home this fall means allowing prospective buyers into your home, in hopes that just one will make an offer and become its new owner. For some sellers, having strangers in their homes sometimes makes them feel a little

anxious and worried. While these feelings are normal and expected, you can rest assured knowing there are safety measures that your REALTOR® is already implementing and that you can take to protect yourself and your belongings.

According to Montgomery County Association of REALTORS® President Eileen Campbell, of ERA Platinum REALTORS® in Worcester, open houses and one-on-one property showings can be extremely valuable in marketing a home and attracting legitimate buyers. Unfortunately, individuals with ulterior motives can attend open houses and property showings as well. “Since it’s impossible to distinguish a legitimate buyer from a criminal by simply looking at them, local REALTORS® are trained on steps they can take to protect themselves and their clients,” reveals Campbell.

Many REALTORS® follow these standards of practice when hosting an open house or conducting a property showing.

- ◆ Open house visitors are often required to register their full name, address and phone number upon entering a property. Some REALTORS® take it a step further and ask each visitor for identification to verify they are who they say they are. Knowing exactly who has been in your home can be extremely helpful not only to your REALTOR® for following up with prospective buyers, but also to the authorities should an incident occur.

- ◆ Whenever possible, REALTORS® strive to have at least one other person working with them at an open house. This allows one agent to be stationed at visitor registration while the other agent accompanies prospective buyers on a tour. Having two agents on-site can be enough to deter a would-be criminal from mischief.

“In some circumstances, like when numerous sets of prospective buyers are touring an open house at the same time, it’s extremely difficult for a REALTOR® to keep an eye on every person,” Campbell warns. “For this reason, home sellers are urged to take their own steps prior to an open house or property showing to protect their home and cherished possessions.”

- ◆ Place valuables - jewelry, financial documents and portable electronics - in a safe, secure place. After an open house, be sure to verify that these items are all accounted for.

- ◆ Other items that may seem less enticing but can still pique someone’s interest (and therefore should be safely stored) include prescription drugs, spare keys and mail, which may contain financial information.

- ◆ Lock your briefcase, purse, laptop and/or cell phone in a secure location. So much personal information is stored in these items that these items should not be accessible to strangers.

- ◆ REALTORS® are trained to ensure all doors and windows are locked before leaving a property. Home sellers should do the same upon returning after an open house.

“To effectively lessen the risk of having strangers in your home, it’s important that you and your REALTOR® work together to ensure be as safe as possible,” comments Campbell.

*Portions of this article were adopted from the National Association of REALTORS® and its REALTOR® Safety Kit.*

Montgomery County Association of REALTORS®

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