

SECTION 4: SAFETY ON THE ROAD

SAFETY ON THE ROAD

As a REALTOR®, you spend a great deal of time in your car. These tips may help protect you from dangerous situations while in your car:

- Your office should keep a file on each agent’s vehicle, including the make, year, model, color and license plate number. Keep this confidential information in a secure place.
- Always take your own car for showings. When you leave your car, lock it.
- Wear a visible company identification card at all times. It is also best to drive a vehicle clearly marked with your company name. These will be invaluable for identification if you need to get assistance.
- When you’re alone getting into your car, the first thing you should do is lock the doors. Be observant when approaching your car, looking underneath and in the back seat before entering.
- Keep roadside breakdown essentials in the trunk, including flares, a tire-inflation canister, basic hand tools, spare belts and hoses, water, a flashlight and a first-aid kit. Have your vehicle inspected regularly, keep it well maintained and learn how to change a flat tire.
- Don’t antagonize potentially dangerous drivers by mimicking their gestures or aggressive driving. Just let it go.
- Dress for the weather. If your car breaks down or you need to escape a dangerous situation on foot, you could find yourself exposed to harsh weather conditions for an extended period of time. In the winter, bring a coat with you and keep a blanket in the trunk of your car along with some spare warm clothes.
- If you’re driving at night and are approached by a vehicle with blue lights, exercise caution. Call 9-1-1 to identify the vehicle, turn on your flashers to acknowledge that you see the police car, and keep moving until you’re in a well-lit area. A legitimate law enforcement official will understand your caution.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >

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SAFETY ON THE ROAD | CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Parking Lot Safety: Don't Become an Easy Target!

- If you're accosted in a parking lot and forced to drive, don't leave the area. If you're in a crowded area, run your vehicle into another one or into something else, such as a building or a tree. You'll attract attention, and that's the last thing a perpetrator wants. If you're confronted at your car, throw your car key in one direction and run screaming in the opposite direction. For this reason, keep your car key separate from your other keys.
- As you walk through the parking lot, observe those around you. Notice if there are strangers sitting in parked cars or standing in your pathway. If so, choose an alternate route and avoid them.
- Always be alert and aware. Have your car keys in your hand and be ready to unlock the door without delay.
- Don't place your purse or package on the roof of the car while loading other items.

AUTO ACCIDENT SCAMS

An apparent auto accident may not be an accident at all, but rather a scam. Learn to recognize the following:

Swoop and Squat - Two vehicles work as a team to set up an accident. One vehicle pulls in front of an innocent driver and the other alongside, blocking the victim in. The lead car stops short, causing the victim to rear-end him. The car that pulled up alongside serves as a block and prevents the victim from avoiding a collision.

Drive Down - As an innocent driver tries to merge into traffic, the suspect driver yields, waving on the other driver. As this innocent driver merges, the suspect driver intentionally collides with the victim and denies giving him the right of way.

Start and Stop - Stopped in the same lane of traffic, the suspect's vehicle is positioned directly in front of the victim. The suspect starts to move forward as does the innocent driver. For no reason, the suspect vehicle suddenly stops short, causing the victim to rear-end him.

Sideswiping in a Two-lane Turn - At an intersection that has two left turn lanes, the suspect crosses the centerline, intentionally sideswiping the victim's car. The suspect then alleges that the victim caused the collision by entering his lane.

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SAFETY ON THE ROAD | CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ATM SAFETY

- Try to plan your visits to automatic teller during the day, rather than after dark.
- Choose an ATM location in a busy public place.
- If possible, take along a friend who can watch the surroundings while you are conducting your transaction.
- Pre-plan your transaction carefully, and don't spend too much time at the machine.
- When you make a withdrawal, quickly place the money in your purse or wallet and leave as soon as you finish your transaction.
- Watch out for suspicious-looking people waiting around an ATM – they may not really be customers. If someone offers to let you go ahead of them, decline politely and leave.
- When visiting a drive-through ATM, keep your doors locked and be prepared to drive away quickly. If anyone approaches your car on foot, roll up your window and drive off.
- If you have not finished your transaction, and a suspicious character approaches you, press the CANCEL button, receive your card and leave quickly.

(Sources: REALTOR® Magazine, Georgia Real Estate Commission, Louisiana REALTORS®, National Safety Council, Pinehurst NC Police Department, City of Mesa, AZ)