

Tragic Ohio events of past week put REALTOR® safety in spotlight

Early this week, the Ohio Association of REALTORS® reported, with deep sadness, on the murders of two prominent Northeast Ohio REALTORS®. Although it appears that the suspects have been detained by police, their deaths once again remind area real estate agents about the critical importance of keeping safe on the job.

“A real estate agent, like anyone else whose job depends on daily contact with strangers, is always a potential target for violent crimes”, says John Tomaino, a former law-enforcement officer and a REALTOR® with Real Living Volpini Realty Group, Youngtown, Ohio. Tomaino reminded real estate agents about taking common-sense precautions, particularly when dealing with new clients or vacant homes.

MAR urges all members to exercise caution and awareness, to refresh yourself on the key measures for staying safe, to review and understand the risks you face daily, and to develop a safety strategy for you and your peers. Important Safety Tips

Always keep your identification and a cell phone handy, with emergency contacts and 911 programmed into your speed dial.

Create a special code word that signals distress to a co-worker that can be used in conversation but will alert them to call police.

Leave items such as a purse or wallet in the car or at the office.

Create an itinerary and stick to it.

Make sure another person knows where you are, and if possible, have and if possible, have another agent show the house with you.

Meet prospective home buyers in the office setting first to get a name, address and phone number.

Be suspicious of a client who wants to see a particular property immediately, claims to have a large sum of money to invest or claims to be a celebrity.

Familiarize yourself with the area so you know the fastest way to leave.

Don't wear expensive jewelry while showing houses.

Don't advertise a property as vacant and insist that the electricity be kept on at vacant properties.

Maintain a file at your agency that includes vehicle information and personal information for each agent in the case that an agent goes missing.

Source: Austintown, Hubbard and Poland police departments and the Youngstown Columbiana Association of REALTORS®.

Additional safety precautions for REALTORS® can be found on NAR's site at http://www.realtor.org/about_nar/safety.