

An industry's real commitment to REALTOR® safety

The year was 2011, and Ashley Oakland was a pretty 27-year-old REALTOR® in Des Moines, Iowa.

She had been an agent for Century 21 since 2010 and was working inside a Des Moines model townhouse on Friday, April 8. A home builder employee heard a commotion inside the townhouse Ashley was showing to a potential buyer. The employee rushed to the scene and found Ashley on the floor, having been shot twice by her assailant. Ashley's killer has never been found.

In a more widely known case, 50-year-old Beverly Carter was showing a home to a man and a woman in Little Rock, Arkansas on Thursday, September 25, 2014. Beverly's story also ends tragically as she was kidnapped and eventually murdered by the couple. She was targeted because she was perceived as being "a rich broker who worked alone."

While Beverly's killers were brought to justice, the incident serves as a reminder that real estate agents face unique safety issues while performing their jobs. Meeting potential buyers, some of them unfamiliar, presents an inherent potential for danger. The real estate industry has taken steps to help emphasize safety and educate agents on ways they can create a work environment that's less threatening.

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) has been on the forefront of promoting safety in the real estate industry. NAR developed a comprehensive *Safety Resource Kit* that provides access to webinars, apps, articles and videos that help educate REALTORS® on ways they can create a safer work environment. NAR also offers the *Safety Matters: Safe Business = Smart Business* course, free of charge, to state and local REALTOR® associations. The course offers keys to safety awareness and demonstrates how to avoid or respond to dangerous situations.

NAR's safety offerings also include *the 56 Safety Tips for REALTORS®*. This comprehensive listing provides short and memorable tips to follow to help ensure a safe and secure environment for REALTORS® and their associates. Tips range from concepts as simple as taking a self-defense course, to planning at least two "escape routes" in a home in anticipation of danger during showings or open houses.

The Beverly Carter foundation, under the leadership of Beverly's son Carl Carter, offers tip sheets, instructor-led safety education, and a suite of downloadable resources to help educate agents on the importance of safety and motivate them to take steps to ensure their safety. The foundation also offers video training modules that give viewers another source for important information that could one day prevent tragedy from striking.

In addition, SentiLock, NAR's official real estate lockbox solution, echoes the industry's focus on providing a safe and secure selling environment. SentiLock offers an Agent Safety feature as an optional benefit in its SentiKey™ Real Estate app. Users of the app can set up emergency contacts, and the Agent Safety feature automatically and discreetly alerts the emergency contacts if the REALTOR® indicates that he/she does not feel safe or cannot confirm that the environment is safe. The Safety Feature is no guarantee that problems will never occur, however, when used in combination with the NAR's safety training, it offers another layer of protection for REALTORS®.

There's no doubt that real estate agents face unique safety issues while performing their duties. The real estate industry has made significant and admirable strides to make sure that every member of the real estate industry enjoys a safer environment and is better prepared when faced with danger.



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