

Conviction Verdict in Arkansas Murder of Realtor Beverly Carter Puts Spotlight Once Again on Safety

Real estate professionals nationwide “arming” themselves with panic button and smartphone app

This article was written by Robb Monkman, the Founder and CEO of React Mobile. React Mobile a Featured Safety Provider in NAR's REALTOR® Safety Program. This article is not an endorsement by NAR and should not be inferred as suggesting a preference over other applications or products currently available in the market. Readers should do their own due diligence when determining their needs when it comes to safety products.

The recent conviction of Aaron Lewis in the Arkansas murder of REALTOR® Beverly Carter is another stark reminder of the danger real estate agents face every day. The details are chilling. Carter was reported missing the night of September 25, 2014, several hours after she left work at Crye-Leike REALTORS® to show a home to a potential client. Authorities say that client was Aaron Lewis, who was later arrested and charged with her kidnapping and murder. After days of searching, authorities found Carter's body in a shallow grave off Highway 5 in Pulaski County.

While 96% of real estate professionals have never been the victim of crime, according to the [National Association of REALTORS® \(NAR\) 2015 Member Safety Report](#), 40% have found themselves in situations where they have feared for their safety or the safety of their personal information. Also in 2015, NAR expanded its REALTOR® Safety program, creating new resources to help its members feel more empowered, confident and safe. Brokers everywhere have multiplied their efforts to educate their agents about how best to protect themselves. A rapidly growing number of them are going a step further, adopting new technology to help provide an extra layer of security when meeting new clients.

Kim Salvesson-Pauly has been an agent for 22 years and since 2007 the owner of 5 Windermere Real Estate offices located in the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon. She's been aware of the personal risks from the beginning and helped to institute a REALTOR® safety program while serving as an executive committee member of the Oregon Association of REALTORS®. Kim recently purchased React Sidekicks from [React Mobile](#) for each one of her offices. The Bluetooth panic button quickly and remotely activates an alert without the need to find, unlock and dial from a phone that may not be within reach. The React Sidekick pairs with the free React Mobile safety app to enable family, friends and co-workers to track an agents' whereabouts in real time using GPS. As a Featured Provider in NAR's REALTOR® Safety Program, React Mobile offers the React Sidekick personal safety device to members at a 15% discount. Visit www.realtor.org/safety to learn more.

The React Mobile solution works worldwide wherever Wi-Fi or cellular service is available, and when the Sidekick is activated, whomever the agent has designated to be a part of their emergency network receives a “Help Me” alert text message and email that includes a link to their GPS location. Agents can also choose to automatically post their alerts to Facebook and Twitter to let an even wider network of contacts know where they are and that they need help. It is always good practice to have a back-up safety plan in place. For example, let others know where you are going, create a check-in schedule, or ask a friend or colleague to come to the appointment with you.

Kim says the need to improve safety really hit home when she got a call from the Sheriff's office one night to ask if she had heard from one of her agents. “The husband had called the Sheriff because he hadn't been able to reach her. That's when I realized how important it is for us to have another source to contact agents.”

Now when one of her agents is going to show a home, they can check out a Sidekick and that office can automatically follow their location and be alerted for help in an emergency. “We’re the largest real estate office in the Gorge, and I’m constantly working to provide the best tools to agents to help them operate their business. Obviously, personal safety plays a key role. As our agents start to use the Sidekick, I’m hoping it will help to lead an industry wide movement to adopt this technology.”

It’s not just veteran agents using new technology. Aimee Slesk is a relatively new Windermere agent serving the Bellingham Washington region. Her training emphasized the need to meet new clients at the office and request a copy of their driver’s license prior to showing them a property. Aimee has been using the React Mobile smartphone app and recently added the Sidekick. “It’s so much more convenient - I can keep it in my pocket without anyone even knowing. It’s so easy to access and take to open houses, or even running at night.”

Since last September, in association with National REALTOR® Safety Month, Windermere Corporate has provided React Sidekicks to about 150 Seattle-area agents. President OB Jacobi says the company is constantly looking for new innovative products to help ensure the safety and well-being of their agents. “The safety issue is very important to us. Ten years ago, one of our own agents, a six foot-three-inch male, and young father, died of multiple stab wounds in the house he was showing. His death galvanized the community.”

OB says the tragedy resulted in Windermere putting in place additional precautions, ranging from awareness and self-defense training to basic rules such as requiring agents to add 911 to their phone contacts. “The program with React Mobile is an integral part of our quest to provide agents with the latest technology available. It turns a smartphone into a lifeline. We encourage agents to wear or carry the Sidekick in their pocket. Then all it takes is one quick click to alert their customized contact list.” OB hopes to expand the program to additional offices in the near future.

Learn more about the REALTOR® Safety Program and the React Mobile safety solution by visiting: <http://www.realtor.org/safety>. Members receive a 15% discount on the React Sidekick safety device with the promo code “REACTNAR”. For more information, [watch a short video](#) on how React Mobile is helping real estate agents stay safe on the job.