



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS RESOURCE

“The Ocean State’s Trusted Voice in Real Estate®”

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NOVEMBER 2021



This project began in 2019 just before the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. The Kent Washington Association of REALTORS® addresses several real estate vulnerabilities including personal and physical safety as well as cybersecurity. It is critical in this industry to conduct business mindful of the personal safety of our clients, customers, colleagues and ourselves. Recent events have brought this to the forefront of our thinking. Equally important is the financial safety of funds entrusted to REALTORS® and the security of personal information which REALTORS® often collect when completing real estate transactions.

The Kent Washington Association of REALTORS® hopes that this information can be used as a guide to help our members prepare, prevent and respond to any potential emergencies arising within their businesses.

Assets:

1. Life

- A. Personal safety
- B. Client and Colleague safety

2. Property

- A. Physical
- B. Data/Information

In every situation REALTORS® encounter, they must be aware of two assets: life and property. We constantly move between locations we know well and those we don't. Take a moment to review this Personal Safety Checklist to remind yourself to conduct your day-to-day activities safely.

Personal Safety Checklist

At Home

- Do you keep doors and windows locked at all times?
- Do you have a peephole so that you can see who is outside without having to open the door?
- Do you verify a person's identification before opening the door?
- Do you refuse to reveal personal information to anyone on the phone or at your door?
- Do you always have your keys ready when approaching your home?
- If you return home to find windows and doors tampered with, would you avoid entering and go to a neighbor's house to call the police?
- Do you teach family members not to give personal or family information to strangers over the phone?

On the Go

- Do you plan in advance the safest route to your destination?
- Do you choose busy, well-lit streets?
- Do you avoid routes that pass by high-risk areas?
- Do you walk facing traffic so you can see approaching cars?
- Do you walk near the curb to avoid the element of surprise or someone hiding between shrubs or in a doorway?
- Do you stay out of reach if someone in a vehicle asks directions?
- Are you wary of approaching strangers?
- Do you get a description of the person and/or vehicle following you?
- If you continue to be followed, do you flee to the nearest safe place?
- Do you avoid carrying large sums of money in your purse or wallet?
- Do you carry your purse close to your body, without wrapping the straps around your arm or hand?
- Do you avoid leaving a purse unattended, even for a moment?
- Do you avoid displaying large amounts of cash in public?

Personal Safety Checklist, continued

In Your Vehicle

- Do you always lock your car doors while driving?
- Do you keep windows rolled up whenever possible?
- Do you avoid picking up hitchhikers?
- Do you keep your car in good running order to avoid breakdowns in dangerous areas?
- Do you look for well-lit areas to park your car?
- Do you always lock your car when it is parked?
- Do you look around the car before you get out, especially at night or in deserted areas such as underground parking lots?
- When returning to your car, do you have your keys in hand?
- Do you look in the back seat before getting into the car?
- If you are being followed, do you avoid going home and go to the nearest place of safety instead?

Properties You Show and Places of Public Assembly

Before you enter:

- Take a good look. Does the building you enter appear to be in a condition that makes you feel comfortable? Is the main entrance wide and does it open outward to allow easy exit? Is the outside area clear of materials stored against the building or blocking exits?
- Have a communication plan. Identify a relative or friend to contact in case of emergency and you are separated from family or friends.
- Plan a meeting place. Pick a meeting place outside to meet family or friends with whom you are attending the function. If there is an emergency, be sure to meet them there.

When you enter:

- Take a good look. Locate all available exits immediately. Some exits may be in front and some in back of you. Be prepared to use your closest exit. You may not be able to use the main exit.
- Check for clear exit paths. Make sure aisles are wide enough and not obstructed by chairs or furniture. Check to make sure your exit door is not blocked or chained. If there are not at least two exits or exit paths are blocked, report the violation to management and leave the building if it is not immediately addressed.
- Do you feel safe? Does the building appear to be overcrowded? Are there fire sources such as candles burning, cigarettes or cigars burning, pyrotechnics, or other heat sources that make you feel unsafe? If you do not feel safe in the building, leave immediately.

Data and Cybersecurity

REALTORS® are under attack constantly for the personal information and other people's money that is entrusted to them. Remain vigilant and review the following list to stay safe from hackers attempts to attack your information. Every day, the news media and TV networks are talking about ransomware. Three of the most common ways for hackers to get into your networks and computers are phishing emails, deploying patches to software, and vulnerabilities in your VPN (Virtual Private Network) servers.

With the expansion of data security incidents and ransomware happening to many businesses and individuals, here are seven items for you to consider to potentially minimize risk.

- Consider cybersecurity insurance. That can cover costs ranging from the technical needs, legal reporting, ransom, and more. Your insurance provider may be able to give you a rider.
- Have a disaster recovery plan in place. Have you risked ranked your applications and can restore them if something happens? Are backups offsite?
- Records retention policy. Do you have one? Do not keep old email or unnecessary files on your server. If your files get encrypted, what would you not want to be posted publicly? Do a search of personal information such as your doctors, kids, attorneys, etc. or anyone where there's a conversation that does not need to be retained.
- Multifactor authentication. Think of your house. It has a deadbolt. Your email and VPN need it as well.
- Have a policy to prohibit anyone from plugging in old computers into your network - unless already updated with any necessary software or security patch. While important security patches may exist in your computers and network - old computers may not have those corrections and can be an immediate path into your computer system. This policy should consider or include external hard drives and flash drives.
- Understand notices you get when accessing third-party internet providers at hotels, restaurants, etc. indicating anything you type (including your passwords) can be viewed by others - this is a real concern. Using your phone as a hotspot may be a better option than the risk of opening the potential for your passwords to be read.

Phishing and Spoofing

All of these items apply to personal computers in your home as well as in your office.

Be wary of attachments! In real estate, you get many emails that include attachments - making our industry and your computers/servers even more vulnerable to attack than others without such extensive public contact. It's important to consider how to prepare and to minimize your risks.

Your technology provider may have different or additional thoughts on how to best protect your electronic information and computers - so it's always good to check with a professional for specific guidance. Criminals are looking for ways to get into your email system. The plan is then to target a closing and spoof an email to your clients with wiring instructions that send your client's money to the criminal's account. There are ways of keeping your client's money safe by picking up the phone and calling the attorney's office. Always call a known number and not a phone number in the email just received! You can even create a secret PIN known only you and the attorney.

Office Policies

Does your office have the following policies? Is everyone affiliated with your office familiar with these office policies? Utilize the Office Safety Inspection Checklist on the following pages.

- Cyber policy including use of office and personal connected devices/drives
- Gun policy regarding carrying on office property for agents and the public
- First aid kit and location
- Fire extinguishers/Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors with regular testing
- Emergency evacuation plan

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters happen with more frequency than ever before. Preparation is the key to safeguarding your life and property. Consider how prepared you are if any of these natural disasters occurs:

- Fire
- Earthquake
- Flood
- Hurricane

OFFICE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST Page 1 of 3		Date:		
Inspector(s):		Location	Condition	Comments
Bulletin Boards and Signs				
Are they clean and readable?				
Is the material changed frequently?				
Do items interfere with people walking by?				
Floors				
Is there loose material, debris, worn carpeting?				
Are the floors slippery, oily or wet?				
Stairways and Aisles				
Are they clear and unblocked?				
Are stairways well lighted?				
Are handrails, handholds in place?				
Are the aisles marked and visible?				
Equipment				
Are guards, screens and sound-dampening devices in place and effective?				
Is the furniture in good repair and safe to use? Look for:				
- chairs that are in poor repair				
- sharp edges on desks and cabinets				
- poor ergonomics (keyboard elevation, chair adjustment, desk height)				
- crowding				
Are ladders well maintained and safe to use?				
Emergency Equipment				
Is all fire control equipment regularly tested and certified?				
Is fire control equipment appropriate for the type of fire it must control?				
Is emergency lighting in place and regularly tested?				
Building				
Do buildings conform to standards with respect to use, occupancy, building services, and plumbing facilities?				
Check the following structures to ensure safety:				
- swinging doors				
- floor and wall openings				
- ladders, stairways and ramps				
- guardrails				
Are materials stored safely?				
Air Handling System				
Does air exchange rate meet standard requirements?				
Is the system free of sources of contamination (e.g., asbestos, microorganisms, dust, fumes)?				
Is humidity within recommended range?				

OFFICE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST Page 2 of 2**Hazardous Products**

Location Condition Comments

Are there any hazardous products (e.g., products regulated by WHMIS)?			
- If yes, are the products properly labelled?			
- If yes, is there a corresponding safety data sheet (SDS) for each product?			
- If yes, are workers trained in how to work with or near these products safely?			

Sanitation

Are washrooms and food preparation areas clean?			
Are the following provided adequately?			
- toilets			
- showers			
- potable (drinkable) water			
- clothing storage			
- change rooms			
- field accommodations			
- lunchrooms			
Are measures in place to prevent the spread of disease?			

Security

Do entry and exit procedures provide workers personal security at night?			
Are emergency (evacuation, fire, bomb threat, hostile person) procedures in place?			

Lighting

Are lamp reflectors clean?			
Are bulbs missing?			
Are any areas dark?			

Material Storage

Are materials neatly and safely piled?			
Are there stepladders or stools to get to materials on higher shelves?			
Are storage shelves overloaded or beyond their rated capacity?			
Are large and heavy objects stored on lower shelves?			
Are passageways and work areas clear of obstructions?			

General

Are extension cords used extensively? (if so, consider installing permanent wiring)			
Are electrical or telephone cords exposed in areas where employees may become entangled?			
Is electrical wiring properly installed?			
Are machines properly guarded?			
Does any equipment have sharp metal projections?			
Are wall and ceiling fixtures fastened securely?			

OFFICE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST Page 3 of 3

General, continued	Location	Condition	Comments
Are paper and waste properly disposed of?			
Are desk and file drawers kept closed when not in use?			
Are office accessories stored appropriately?			
Are materials stacked on desks or cabinets?			
Are file cabinet drawers overloaded?			
Are file cabinets loaded with the heaviest items in the bottom drawers?			
Are shelves securely fastened to the wall when necessary?			
Are filing stools or wastebaskets placed where they might be tripping hazards?			



**A special thank you to everyone who helped on this project:
Chris Fascione, Betsy Alexander, Mary Coutu, Rob Cressman, Bryant Da Cruz, Bill Fain, and Mark McHugh**