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BUSINESS

Safety is everyone's business

By Don Rogers

Sunday, March 18, 2007 6:45 AM CDT

The cameraman attached the microphone to my shirt and positioned his camera. The reporter sat down across the table from me at the association office and reviewed his notes.

Nobody said "action," but the camera light went on, and the reporter started asking questions. I did my best to remain calm and address a very serious matter.

The reporter was there to talk with me about the attack, two weeks ago, on one of our Realtors while she showed a house to a man she thought to be a potential buyer. Most of you probably saw the extensive news coverage generated by this unfortunate incident. I am certain you share my sadness over this incident and my outrage and anger at the individual who perpetrated this crime. Realtors in St. Charles County and throughout the region receive training in safety from their companies and their local Realtor organizations. Here in St. Charles County, all new members of our association are required to complete an orientation program, of which Realtor safety is a component. This initial training is supplemented by the individual real estate companies and by an annual Safety Week program sponsored by the National Association of Realtors.

Sadly, we know that no precautions are foolproof and that even when every precaution is taken, as in the recent case, bad things can still happen.

Realtors are fortunate to be in a business where we make dreams come true for the families we serve. St. Charles County is a great place to live and to sell real estate, and one isolated incident will not change that. We are fortunate to work with the wonderful people who call St. Charles County home, or those who would like to be our neighbors.

Sadly, in our society today, Realtors, like all of you, have to be on guard against those individuals with evil intentions. Some of the steps your Realtor may take to ensure his or her safety and yours include:

Your Realtor may ask you to meet him or her at the real estate office before looking at homes for the first time. This allows a Realtor to meet new clients in a safe environment and familiarize those clients with his or her company and the other Realtors in the office. This also provides a great opportunity for you to further discuss your housing needs, financial concerns and other matters with your Realtor. From his or her office, your Realtor can make adjustments to the homes scheduled to be seen, if this is needed to better meet the needs of you and your family.

Your Realtor may ask you for identification when you first meet and may also ask you to fill out a data form with contact, employment and other information. This allows Realtors to ensure the identity of those we work with. While this information provides peace of mind to your Realtor, it also will be necessary for lenders, title companies and other service providers as you go through the home-buying process.

In addition, chances are you will spend a lot of time with your Realtor. The information you

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provide can be vital to you and your family if there should be an accident or medical emergency.

Your Realtor generally will suggest you follow him or her to the homes you are looking at, rather than travel together in your car or his or hers. All of us feel safer and more comfortable in the familiar surroundings of our own vehicles. Traveling alone or with your family in your own car will make it easier for you to openly discuss the pluses and minuses of the homes you view. In addition, traveling separately will make it easier for you and your Realtor to get to the next appointment, children's game or other event and keep up with our busy lives.

Your Realtor may stay at the top of the steps or in the hallway when you view the basement or bedrooms of your potential new home. This allows you more freedom to view all aspects of the property. Always feel free to take as much time as you need to view all parts of your potential new home, and feel free to ask your Realtor any questions that come to mind.

Don't take any of the safety precautions utilized by your Realtor personally. You are not being targeted for special treatment. Realtors are trained to utilize these precautions with every client. With your help and cooperation, you and your Realtor will be safe and secure as you search for your new place to call home.

Don Rogers is president of the St. Charles County Association of Realtors. E-mail him at comments@StCharlesREALTORS.com if you have any real estate-related questions or comments you would like to see addressed in this column.

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