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Sellers On Edge After Real Estate Agent Attacked

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DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. -- An attack on a real estate agent in Volusia County has the local association reminding agents to be smart and safe.

Police said when Janice Flasschoen showed a home on Elizabeth Place in South Daytona on Monday **a man posing as a homebuyer pulled out a hammer and attacked her**, WESH 2 News reported.

After Flasschoen was attacked, she turned the tables on the suspect. She was alone showing the property, and many agents, particularly women, do the same thing day in and day out. Real estate can be profitable, but it can sometimes be scary and risky business.

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"I carry my cell phone and I have my pepper spray," said realtor Michele Lenharr.

They are unusual tools of the trade, but Lenharr said she wouldn't be without them. A lone woman who makes her living meeting strangers, Lenharr has a game plan.

"I keep the back door open so I have an escape route, and I park my car in front of the house, not in the driveway, so I have an escape route if I should feel threatened in anyway," she said.

Flasschoen was attacked while showing a home in South Daytona. After she was hit in the head with a hammer, Flasschoen knew it

was either suspect Balazs Gombos or her. She got the upper hand.

"And I just reached out and I just kicked him between the legs and I just kept kicking, and he threw the gun aside and that's when I realized the gun wasn't real," Flasschoen said.

In 1992, a real weapon was used to kill Deborah Snowden in South Daytona as she worked a model home open house. No one has ever been arrested. Three years ago, police say Richard Pate robbed and threatened realtors in Volusia and Flagler counties while posing as a buyer.

Flasschoen survived with the help of some construction workers who held the suspect for police.

After the incident, Lenharr said she is that much more wary as she shows homes and she never turns her back on a client.

"I let them go ahead of me so that I'm never in a room with them behind me and feeling trapped," Lenharr said.

Various realtor associations said they hold safety training programs and will likely put more emphasis on them now. Some of the realtors also take self-defense classes, just in case.

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