

# SAFETY ASSESSMENT FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

Your personal safety is paramount when visiting a property or clients onsite. While not all situations can be avoided, there is a range of steps you can take to prevent a possible incident and create awareness.

## DO:

- Carry a mobile phone on you at all times and have the office and police numbers programmed under a speed dial function;
- If offsite for several hours, report regularly into the office. This ensures, for your safety, someone in the office knows where you are;
- Agree on a secret code that you can say to anyone in the office on the phone if you are in trouble at a property;
- Ensure office staff can access to your diary and view any offsite appointments and inspections. This enables quick access to your location should it be required;
- Ideally conduct property inspections / appraisals or client meetings in pairs, so you never attend a property alone. If this isn't possible, ensure you do not go alone to any properties, or meet with tenants / clients, that may pose a risk or you are suspicious of;
- Prior to an inspection / appraisal, request that pets are restrained for the duration of your time onsite;
- Consider taking self-defence lessons;
- Wear low heeled or flat, fully enclosed and comfortable shoes. There may be broken glass or rubbish on the ground. Additionally, you may need to walk through long grass to inspect an area. Closed shoes will protect from hidden syringes, insects or even snakes;
- Ensure you park in the street or clear surrounds to avoid being blocked in a driveway;
- Trust your gut feeling. If you feel uncomfortable at a property or with a tenant / client, leave immediately. Have an exit comment planned such as, "I just need to get something from the car", and then leave the property and contact local police.

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## DO NOT enter a property, if you see/ hear:

- Additional door locks;
- Blinds down;
- Unusual noises (inc. fan type noises) or arguments;
- Strange smells i.e. rotten egg or chemicals;
- Additional electrical wiring. (inc. security cameras. This may indicate the property is being used for an illegal activity);
- Plastic or additional coverings on windows;
- Neighbours comment they never sight tenants;
- An overgrown garden;
- Tape on doorways and windows;
- Check front door for notes;
- A child is home alone. Leave the property and arrange an alternate time;
- Are suspicious that the property contains friable asbestos (i.e. easily reduced to a powder by hand when dry) or has an unsound building structure such as a rotting balcony, balustrade and stairs, collapsing ceilings, etc.
- A storm damaged property where there may be an electrical safety risk i.e. power lines down by fallen trees;
- The property is under construction or renovation.

## Upon entering a property:

- Open all doors slowly. If there are any signs or tape ripping, bad smells, raised voices, etc, close the door immediately and walk away (consider holding your breath when opening the door);
- Always identify your exits so you can leave a property safely, quickly and easily. Consider using a wedge to keep the front door of the property open;
- Don't allow someone to follow you into a property or room, therefore standing between you and the exit;
- Check that pets are restrained before you proceed inside;
- Keep an eye out for empty containers of over-the-counter cold or allergy medicines, chemistry equipment, unusually sophisticated weight scales, large amounts of tinfoil, baking soda or electrical cords. These could be a sign of drug activity;
- Take note of an unusual number of mattresses throughout the property and any hand written signs at the front of a property saying 'massage'. These could be signs that the property may be being used as an illegal brothel.

**Note:** For occupational health and safety reasons police are unable to enter properties identified as crop houses until an electrician provides an electrical safety clearance on the property.

## Disclaimer

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