



Open House Safety Tips

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OPEN HOUSES ARE EASY TARGETS FOR THIEVES. THEY CAN WANDER AROUND A HOME AND LOOK FOR FUN THINGS TO STEAL. MAKE YOUR CLIENT'S HOME RESISTANT TO THEFT BY FOLLOWING THESE SIMPLE TIPS.

Lock up valuables, important papers, and firearms.

Some home owners think that their valuables are safe if they're hidden from plain view, or maybe even secured in a locked drawer. Don't let them be lulled into believing they're secure from theft. Thieves are clever. They know where precious items are typically hidden, and they know how to access them quickly. Items of worth are safest when placed in a thick safe that is securely bolted and affixed to a wall or floor—or even better, when stored in a safety deposit box at a local bank. When in doubt about the safe storage of a particular item, get it out of the home.

Consider having an identification number engraved on all valuables.

When someone engraves his or her driver's license number on a valuable piece of jewelry or electronic equipment, it gives law enforcement a critical piece of information that can be entered into a statewide stolen property database, which increases the probability that, if the stolen property is recovered, it can be identified and returned. Contact your local jeweler for assistance. (NOTE: Never engrave your social security number on any item.)

Take special precautions with prescription drugs.

Nationwide, prescription drug thefts are on the rise. Advise your clients to remove prescription drugs from their home, lock them up, or discard them safely. Some cities have placed specially designed metal bins in public buildings—such as city halls, libraries, and senior centers—where medications that are out of date or are no longer needed can be conveniently discarded. In addition, local law enforcement agencies typically host prescription drug take-back days, which OCAR will advertise via social media and in the *What's Up*. Never flush either over-the-counter or prescription medications down the toilet!

Ask that all visitors register.

Have them print their full name, address, telephone number, and email. Do not allow any visitor who is unwilling to register to tour the home. While this approach may seem to be overly strict, you can explain that your clients have requested it for their security and peace of mind—and that you are not trying to obtain personal information

from guests to spam them. OCAR sells Open House Registries you can use for this purpose, or you can try an app like Open Home Pro, which is available for both iPad and Android tablets.

Keep an eye on both your stuff and your visitors.

Never leave any business items (e.g., keys, laptop, phone, tablets, etc.) unattended. REALTORS® often report that they don't want to follow open house attendees around; however, it's a good safety strategy for you and your client's home if you work with a partner who can keep an eye on the second floor while you are greeting visitors downstairs.

If you suspect that something isn't right, trust your gut.

Don't hesitate to contact the nonemergency number of your local police department if you note suspicious behavior or are concerned about someone or something you've seen. If something seems "off," trust your judgment and don't worry about "inconveniencing" anyone. If it's a life-threatening emergency, dial 911.

Watch for additional information and updates in *What's Up*.

If OCAR receives specific reports from law enforcement about open house thefts, and a request to communicate them, we will include that information in our *What's Up*. Watch for it. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.