

The Concerning Rise of Real Estate Agent Attacks

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Real estate agents are talented individuals who help people to buy and sell houses, and their experience and advice is often invaluable to the process of buying or selling a property. Sadly, the nature of the real estate business can put some agents at risk because it often requires them to be alone with complete strangers in isolated locations. There are always at least a few deaths due to homicide each year among real estate agents, but in the past years, statisticians have found that real estate homicides are rising sharply. If you are a real estate agent, it is important to understand why real estate agent attacks are increasing and learn about realtor safety.

Why are real estate agents attacked?

Experts on real estate safety agree that the reason so many real estate agents are attacked is because their job requires them to be alone with random members of the public. Unlike customer service jobs that typically include working with coworkers, many real estate agents work alone. They also make scheduled appointments to show homes and advertise when they will be having open houses, so it is easy for a potential attacker to ascertain a real estate agent's whereabouts.

What are some of the most recent attacks on real estate agents?

A look at a few of the most recent real estate agent attacks reveal some disturbing trends. Often, attacks are motivated by money, and each year, many real estate agents are robbed of their jewelry, money, and other valuables while attempting to show a home. It is actually somewhat rare for a realtor to be murdered by an unhinged stalker. Instead, most deaths are either a personal attack that took place while the agent was at work or an attempted robbery or hostage situation that ended in death.

ASHLEY OKLAND

Ashley Okland was a 27 year old real estate agent from Iowa who was [killed while working alone at an open house](#) in a community of townhomes. Workers outside of the townhouse heard a commotion, rushed into the townhouse, and found Okland lying on the ground and bleeding. She later succumbed to her injuries from two gunshot wounds at the hospital. So far, police have not been able to find her killer.

JANICE TISDALE

Janice Tisdale had an appointment to meet Emilio Maldonado and his banker in a remote suburban community, and she immediately felt like something was wrong when Maldonado showed up alone. As she was bending down to lock the door, Maldonado hit her over the head and said that he would not let her leave until she got him \$4,000 somehow. When Maldonado went towards his car to get paper for a ransom note, [Tisdale was able to flee towards the road](#). She ran to a passing car full of teenagers, who kept her safe while subduing Maldonado, and managed to survive the attack. Her attacker is now in prison for 60 years.

BEVERLY CARTER

[According to her killer](#), 50 year old Beverly Carter was targeted because "she was a woman that worked alone." Carter was supposed to show a home to Arron Lewis, who claimed to be a potential buyer, but she was attacked by the man instead. At first, Lewis planned to hold Carter for ransom, but he then decided to kill her after she was bound with duct tape. Her body was eventually found buried in a shallow

grave near the home she was trying to sell. Her killer was eventually found, and he is now in prison for life.

What makes you more likely to be attacked?

The one thing that almost all real estate agent attacks have in common is that the real estate agent met their client alone in an isolated, rural area. Unfortunately, in the real estate business, this is not always avoidable, but you may be able to bring along company, such as a home inspector or the seller of the house, to keep you from being alone with a client. Many real estate agent attacks are crimes of opportunity, where the assailant notices that the real estate agent is wearing expensive jewelry or has a full pocketbook. Visible signs of wealth therefore make a person more likely to be attacked. Unfortunately, in the case of real estate homicides, women are more likely to be attacked than men because they are viewed as a weaker target that is less likely to fight back.

What can you do to be safe?

Experts on realtor safety emphasize that it is important to listen to your instincts. Real estate agents are trained to be polite and accommodating, so they often dismiss or ignore any signs that something is wrong. However, many real estate agents who were attacked mention that they ignored a client's unusual behavior prior to the attack. If you feel uncomfortable or think that something is wrong with a client, it is ok to leave quickly. Your subconscious may be warning you about a potential attack, and safety is always more important than making a sale or being nice to a client.

Real estate safety also relies on planning ahead and making yourself a less appealing target. Most people who are attacked are working alone and seem to be wealthy. Therefore, you should never wear expensive jewelry on the job because it implies that you might be a valuable hostage. Whenever possible, it is wise to have company instead of meeting a client alone. Most attacks occur in isolated homes, so working with a partner is particularly important if you are showing a home that is far away from any other location. There are a few items you can carry to further ensure your safety. If it is legal in your area, it may be beneficial to carry a small handgun, pepper spray, or other sort of weapon with you. One of the most beneficial ways to stay safe is to carry a safety alert device that sends a distress call as soon as you press a button.