

Personal Safety for Residential & Property Managers

When a suite comes up for rent, managers will likely come in contact with a variety of people who show interest in viewing and possibly renting the suite. Most times, the applicant is a stranger. Their motives may not be just to view an available suite.

There have been situations where a building has been broken into after a manager shows off their security system and perhaps identifies weak areas. Spare keys to suites stolen, or an office broken into targeting areas that may have been identified during an interview.

Following are some safety tips for managers:

IDENTIFY WHO YOU ARE MEETING

- Meet only in an open place such as the lobby.
 - This is especially important if you don't have a separate manager's office in the building or if the office is not located in a high traffic area.
- Verify identity **before** showing suite.
 - Carry a clipboard and write down information on a Client I.D. Form (if asked, say it is required for your "Head Office").
 - Request identification and record it.
 - Record vehicle license plate and description.
 - If applicant is reluctant to show ID, record a description of the person(s). Use your gut feeling to decide if it is best to carry on the viewing.

KEEP A CELL PHONE AT YOUR SIDE

- Carry your cell phone with you at all times—clip it on and make it part of your apparel.
- Program 911 into your speed dial.
- Make sure your battery is fully charged at all times.

WHEN SHOWING A UNIT:

- Call the "Head Office" before leaving your office to inform them you are showing a suite. *"I'm off to show #202 with Mr. Alan Smith. I expect to be back in 15 minutes."*
 - Use the pretense that you are waiting for an important call or fax and must check in. Use the applicants' name and what time you expect to be done. Even if you don't have a "Head Office", call a friend, your own answering machine, or just pretend. The fact that you have notified someone who you are with and when you expect to be available signals to the other person that someone will notice your absence.
- Let the applicant lead the way by walking behind.
- Do not close suite doors behind you.
- Comment on each room from the safety of the door.
- Avoid getting trapped in small spaces such as hallways, storage closets, laundry rooms, or out-of-the-way areas in basements or underground garages.
- Establish escape routes from each level.



HAVE A DISTRESS CODE OR PRE-ARRANGED SIGNAL WITH YOUR OFFICE, COLLEAGUE, FAMILY, OR FRIEND

“I’m at Unit 312 and I need the red file right away.”

- Share and practice your distress code.

GUARD YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Limit the amount of personal info you give to an applicant.
 - Getting to know prospective tenants does not include info about your children, who you live with, or where you live.

DRESS FOR SAFETY

- Look professional, but wear clothes that are comfortable and shoes you can run in.

DANGER IS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO IDENTIFY. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.

- Gut feelings
- Hesitation
- Unexplained fear
- Apprehension

FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

- Yell “Fire!” “Get away from me!” or “Stay back!” to get attention.
- Carry a personal alarm that emits a high decibel “scream” after pulling a pin. Many models are available, including keychain sizes.
- Run and call 911 when you can.
- If you strike, mean it.
- No Resistance – not resisting may be the proper choice in a situation.
- Stall for time – appear to go along with the attacker. This may give you time to assess the situation. When his/her guard is down, try to escape.

DISTRACTION THEN FLIGHT

- Verbal Assertiveness – if someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands and yell “STOP” or “STAY BACK”
- Physical Resistance – if you decide to respond physically, remember that your first priority is to get away. Act quickly and decisively to throw the attacker off guard when you escape.

YOUR OFFICE

- Avoid using your personal suite as your office. If there is no office in the building, interview the applicant in the lobby or laundry room.
- Do not show applicants where the spare keys or resident files are kept.
- Do not indicate that you carry cash on the premises (accepting cash for rent payment is NOT encouraged).
- Always lock the office when you are absent.

WEAPONS

Remember that any weapon you produce can also be used against you.



Vancouver Crime Free Multi-Housing Program
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DEALING WITH IRATE TENANTS

As a manager, there will be times when tenants are irate and angry and may be potentially aggressive at decisions or policies of the management. You are likely the first in line to receive their anger. Following are some tactics that may be able to diffuse the situation.

- Listen to them vent their anger. Some people just need to 'get it off their chest'.
- REMAIN CALM. Do not react to or contradict their statements.
- Nod and agree – "I understand your concerns."
- Offer them another avenue of venting – "You may write your concerns to the Head Office to review." or "You can file for arbitration with the Residential Tenancy Office."

IF THE ANGER ESCALATES

- Be aware of your surroundings and where your escape route is.
- Press the speed dial on your phone for 9-1-1 and leave the line open. You don't have to speak in the phone. If appropriate, try to indicate the problem and your location.
- Set off your personal alarm to distract and get away.

Educate yourself on how to diffuse anger with communication courses and books such as Verbal Judo.

Take self-defense training.

OTHER RESOURCES:

www.warealtor.com/safety

www.verbaljudo.com



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