



The Art of Safety

Glen Sutcliffe, CRS, GRI, says he is less concerned about personal safety than he is about protecting a seller's property. The 10-year real estate veteran, who often works with high-end homes for W.C. & A.N. Miller REALTORS® in Washington, D.C., once represented a seller who owned several artifacts that were probably worth more than the home's \$2 million list price. Since many of the artifacts were small, Sutcliffe feared that they "could easily be hidden inside someone's suit coat."

That prompted Sutcliffe to implement several measures to safeguard a seller's home. For instance, he asks sellers to pack up items that cannot be easily replaced, such as jewelry or art objects, and move them out of the house. "There have been problems in the past with stolen property, no matter how well sellers try to hide things," Sutcliffe says.

When some of Sutcliffe's open house drew more than 50 people last year, he decided to hire an assistant to deal with the overflow. "You can't be a greeter and show the

home at the same time," he says. He recruits high school and college students, usually the children of office colleagues, and pays them \$50 to greet visitors at the door. They distribute brochures, make small talk and escort guests inside to meet Sutcliffe. Meanwhile, they watch for suspicious behavior, such as anyone wearing loose-fitting clothing that could hide small objects.

They also look for parties of two or more people who enter the home together, then split up. "Most buyers tend to roam the house together," Sutcliffe says. "If one person looks like they are trying to deflect attention while the second person roams the house, it may be a sign of trouble."

The presentation works so seamlessly that few people suspect that it's a security measure. Instead, buyers and sellers feel they are treated with respect and professionalism. "They tell us, 'This is the most professionally run open house we've ever been to,'" Sutcliffe says.