

Safety for Economic Development Professionals



Economic development often marries the occupations of real estate sales and travel guide. Depending on the occasion, economic developers may find themselves alone with strangers and meeting in remote locations, even in buildings that lack electricity and lighting. Safety concerns can be overcome with advance planning and communication, thoughtful habits, and best practices.

Preparation & Protocols

- Make sure your phone is charged and carry a car-charging cord or battery booster with you.
- Consider the cellular service in the area.
- Program 911 into speed dial.
- Communicate with your colleagues. Let them know where you are going, with whom, and when to expect your return.
- If you are meeting with a stranger, see if you can learn about the person you are meeting with from social media, an online bio, etc.
- If possible, develop a written agenda for your meeting and share with prospects and colleagues. If an agenda is not appropriate, send a quick email to one or more colleagues with your plans outlined.
- Consider a personal safety alarm, pepper spray, or civilian model taser if you will be alone in a remote area.
- Limit the amount of personal information you share when marketing.
- Use technology, like a location-tracking app on your phone or GPS tracking in your car, to let your office keep up with your whereabouts.

When Meeting With Strangers

- Avoid solo meetings. Bring another person along, especially after sunset. Consider including an appropriate ally or stakeholder in a property visit.
- Begin the meeting in your office. Introduce the client to someone else in your office if possible.
- Meet in familiar locations. Visit the property in advance if possible, with an eye toward lighting, entrances, parking and travel routes.
- When showing a building, walk behind the client to avoid being trapped in a room.
- Check in with your office frequently – on arrival for sure – with a quick text or email.
- Keep your phone on your person.
- Consider a vendor for roadside assistance if your work takes you to rural or unfamiliar areas.



Top Safety Tips



- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Anticipate your exit route and park your car so that it cannot be blocked in.
- Park in well-lighted spaces.
- Keep your gas tank above half-full.
- Always lock your car and close the windows.
- Keep valuables out of sight in your car.
- Carry your car keys in your hand. They can be an effective weapon in case of an attack.

Safety should be a priority for professional economic developers, not an afterthought. Consider discussing safety protocols at your next staff meeting. Make sure your team understands the expectation that safety is a priority for all.