

Among the stories:

St. Petersburg, FL, March 2006. A neatly dressed young man posing as a relocated Drug Enforcement Administration agent spent over four hours looking at houses with a real estate agent before asking to return to one of the first homes he had seen. There he attacked her, took her car keys and purse while threatening to kill her with the gun and the 12-inch hunting knife he had concealed on his person. The agent was hurt but not seriously.

DeKalb County, GA, May 2006. Within 11 days, three female real estate agents in DeKalb County reported being robbed at gunpoint by a man and woman. Police said the incidents appeared similar because each happened in the evening hours, involved a female real estate agent and was allegedly committed by an armed man and woman fitting similar descriptions.

"The perpetrators would contact the realtor, usually by phone. In one incident, the realtor actually went to the MARTA station and picked them up, took them to the location, showed them the home, and as they were concluding their walk-through, they were robbed," said Officer Davis. In each case the agent was tied up and her vehicle was stolen.

A month earlier another DeKalb County agent was abducted and forced to withdraw \$1,500 from an ATM machine then taken to a jewelry store where she used credit cards to purchase a \$7,500 Rolex watch for the robber. During the incident he frequently threatened to shoot her or "dismember" her if she did not cooperate.

Diamond Bar, CA, November 2005. A newly licensed real estate agent was shot and critically wounded while canvassing a neighborhood for clients. The victim had apparently appeared to be acting suspiciously and a homeowner shot him after he knocked on his door. Police thought the agent may have been mistaken for someone the homeowner had had an altercation with earlier in the week.

Baltimore, MD, July 2004. Maryland State Police warned realtors about a man who allegedly injured one agent and could be stalking others.

In the first incident a female agent was assaulted during an open house by a visitor who looked around the house then picked up an object and struck the agent on the back of the head. Police had first viewed it as an isolated incident but other agents reported a man matching the description had attended open houses in the area and in one case tried to lure the host agent into an isolated part of the house.

The agent who was hit was able to fend off her attacker but police believe it was intended as a sexual assault.

Many real estate office managers routinely discuss **safety practices** with their agents but few have any hard and fast rules and agents themselves say that they often knowingly take risks because it is the only way they can conduct business. Local real estate boards conduct occasional safety courses and some, such as the Kentucky Board of Realtors, have published booklets on crime prevention for their membership. The National Board of Realtors' (NAR) has designated the week of September 10-16, 2006 as the fourth annual **REALTOR' Safety Week**, stating that more than 54 percent of all respondents to a recent survey reported that they had experienced safety concerns, incidents, or harassing situations on the job.

Law enforcement officials, real estate boards, real estate trainers, and others routinely advise agents to observe some common sense **safety precautions**.