

Safety For Economic Development Professionals

Economic developers sometimes meet with strangers in remote locations and vacant buildings. Applying best practices in advance planning and communications can improve personal safety.

Preparation and Protocols

- Never assume you are safe.
- Make sure your phone is charged and carry a car-charging cord or portable battery.
- Research the cellular service in the area.
- Program 911 into speed dial.
- Let your colleagues know where you are going, with whom, and when to expect your return.
- If you are meeting with a stranger, learn about the person you are meeting with from social media, an online bio, etc.
- If possible, develop an itinerary for your meeting and share with prospects and colleagues. If an itinerary is not available, send a quick email to one or more colleagues with your plans outlined.
- Consider personal safety apps like Noonlight or personal safety alarms like She's Birdie.
- Consider pepper spray or a civilian-model taser if you will be alone in a remote area.
- Use technology such as a location-tracking app on your phone or GPS tracking in your car to let your office keep up with your whereabouts.
- Create a shared distress signal or code word.
- Limit the amount of personal information you share when marketing.

Safety should be a top priority for economic developers, not an afterthought. Discuss safety protocols at staff meetings. Make sure your team understands the expectation that safety is a priority for all.

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.



- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Display confidence.
- 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.
- Trust your instincts.