



**TRANSPORTATION
CABINET**

Division of Right of Way/Utilities/Rails

**RIGHT OF WAY
AGENT SAFETY GUIDE**

**A GUIDE TO ON-THE-JOB SAFETY FOR
RIGHT OF WAY AGENTS**

**COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY TRANSPORTATION CABINET
DIVISION OF RIGHT OF WAY/UTILITIES/RAILS**

INTRODUCTION

The Division of Right of Way & Utilities has a strong commitment to the health and safety of all employees, customers, and protecting the public. To achieve this objective, KYTC will make all reasonable efforts to comply with all government regulations pertaining to safety and health issues. An effective Safety and Health Program will be carried out throughout our organization.

This safety guide sets forth basic responsibilities, guidelines, and rules, for all personnel involved in right of way activities for the Division of Right of Way & Utilities. The intent is to enhance and supplement any safety and health standards that are required by contract documents, or by law, and are applicable to KYTC projects. This safety guide does not cover the full spectrum of published safety and health standards that are mandated by law. It is the employee's and consultant's responsibility to ensure that they comply with all safety directives required by law.

KYTC-Division of Right of Way & Utilities Safety Mission Statement

The personal safety and health of each employee of KYTC is of primary importance. KYTC's mission is to assure its employees and representatives have a safe and healthful working environment which actively involves all employees in identifying, preventing, and correcting workplace safety issues to reduce accidents and injuries, and free from unlawful retaliation.

1. The health and safety of people is valued above all else.
2. Safe, healthy employees have a positive impact on all operations and customers and enhance credibility in the Commonwealth.
3. Safety must be made an integral part of everything we do.
4. Good safety is mainly the result of attitudes and beliefs of people.

Right of Way Agents find themselves in situations in which they are alone with homeowners with whom they have very little information about. The very nature of acquiring private property for public or private use may not be ideal in all situations. Distressed homeowners or tenants who are virtual strangers can make agents susceptible to becoming victims of violent crimes. This guide contains some commonsense safety tips that have been compiled from crime victims and ROW staff statewide.

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Central Office Right of Way and Utilities encourage every office to implement a formal safety program. Each district should implement procedures and education programs that include everyone in the office. This guide is intended as a resource for designing your safety program. Moreover, every right of way agent can and should individually use the safety tips addressed in this guide to practice in a safe manner, even if your office does not have a formal safety program.

Summary of Basic Safety Practices

- Always identify the person you are working with before you meet with them. Always wear your state ID badge and make it visible. Familiarize yourself with the property and neighborhood.
- Always carry your cell phone with you and make sure it's fully charged. Do NOT hesitate to contact for help if you feel help is required.
- Trust your instincts. If you have a bad feeling, don't second guess what it's telling you. Listen to your intuition and protect yourself.

Safety Tip #1 - Know Who You Are Dealing With:

Always identify the person you are meeting with before meeting with them. Always let someone in your office know who you are meeting with as well as the location and time of your meeting.

Always pre-screen Parcel Owners. Obtain and verify their full names, addresses, and contact information such as phone and email. Check their public social

media accounts to see if they're legitimate and how they behave online.

In advance of your meeting drive by the parcel to familiarize yourself with the area. Review any escape routes and back or head your vehicle in an exit position.

Safety Tip #2 – Tell Someone: Always tell someone where you are going, who you are going with and when you will be back. Always make sure the homeowner/tenant knows you have shared this information with someone. You are less likely to be attacked if the criminal knows you will be missed, and they can be identified.

When you work alone in the field, always tell your co-worker, or your supervisor when to expect you back. Even leaving behind a note on your desk could help the authorities find you in an emergency. If possible, always take along a co-worker.

Safety Tip #3 - Keep a Cell Phone at Your Side: Always carry your cell phone with you. Your greatest source

of help is your cell phone. If you keep your cell phone in a purse or briefcase, it may not be available when you need it most.

Program your emergency numbers into you contacts. These numbers should include 911, emergency road service, your office, co-workers, your buddy, and your family numbers. Keep your cell phone fully charged. It's a good idea to have a way to charge your phone in the vehicle for emergency situations.

Use Safety Apps such as Stay Safe, OK Alone, and LONEALERT. Situations wherein safety apps come in handy include: meeting with parcel owners, working alone in remote locations or secluded properties, or if you feel unsafe

Safety Tip #4 –Practical Safety Measures: Always contact your office before/after meeting, keep your keys and cell phone with you, and park where you can get out quickly.

Avoid attics, basements and getting trapped in small rooms. Always let prospective homeowners/tenants

lead the way into rooms, while you stay close to the door.

Do not leave your briefcase, backpack, purse, or laptop sitting on a counter. Do NOT create a crime of opportunity.

Always try to schedule daytime meetings and be aware of suspicious behavior and your surroundings.

Safety Tip #5 - Have a Distress Signal: You may be in a situation where you think you might need help; you can use the phone, but the person you are with can overhear the conversation and you do not want to alarm him or her. This is where a prearranged distress signal can help. Create and share a distress signal with people in the office.

Rehearse in your own mind how you would react to an emergency such as a mugging or physical attack. Know when you will fight back, when you will run and when you will have an opportunity to call 911 for assistance. If you have an emergency, call 911, stay on the line and do not hang up.

Safety Tip #6 - Don't Make Business Too Personal:

Your work materials should be polished and professional, Limit the amount of personal information you share, use your state cell number NOT your personal phone number, and use your state email address NOT your personal address.

Safety Tip #7 - Be a Buddy: Know in advance who you are going to call when: your instincts tell you to get help, you're just a little nervous, or you need help at a homeowner/tenant visit.

Safety Tip #8 - Dress for Safety: Your image is important, so dress professionally. However, dress for safety as well. Do NOT wear expensive jewelry, always have your cell phone with you. Dress for the weather and only carry the cash or credit cards you need. Don't wear shoes that will hamper your ability to move quickly if necessary!

Expensive jewelry can make you a target. We recommend that you save the flashy jewelry for formal occasions.

Dress for the weather. If a vehicle breaks down or you need to escape a dangerous situation on foot, you could find yourself exposed to harsh weather conditions for an extended period. In the winter, bring a coat with you and keep a blanket in the trunk of the vehicle.

Safety Tip #9 - Danger is Not Always Easy to Identify: Gut feelings, hesitation, unexplained fear, and apprehension.

These are signals that something isn't right!

Safety Tip #10 - Practice Car Safety: Always have your keys with you, keep car doors locked at all times, park in a well-lit area. *Do NOT get blocked in, beware of dead-end streets, keep the vehicle in good running condition.

When you are alone, the first thing you should do when you get into the vehicle is lock the doors. Be observant when approaching the vehicle, looking underneath and in the back seat before you get in.

You spend a lot of time in the vehicle. This exposes you to a greater likelihood of running out of gas, a mechanical failure, or an accident. Make sure you have a fully charged cell phone, tools, blankets, flares, first aid kit and warm clothes in the trunk of the vehicle. Using a cell phone while driving can cause an accident. Never attempt to take notes while driving - pull over and stop in a safe place first. Make sure all doors are locked when you are driving. Secure valuables out of sight.

Safety Tip #11 - Let Them Lead the Way: When you visit a property, be aware of possible escape routes and leave doors open if possible. Be cautious in attics and basements, always walk behind your owners/tenants.

Safety Tip #12 - Fight or Flight?: Agents may find themselves in dangerous situations. If this happens, remember that the primary goal in any incident is to escape from the danger and contact help. It is best to find a discreet way of removing yourself from the

situation, such as stepping outside to make a phone call and not returning.

If an attack does occur, trust yourself and stay as calm as possible. Think rationally and evaluate your options. There is no one right way to respond to a confrontation. The response depends on the circumstances: location of the attack, your personal resources, the characteristics of the assailant and the presence of weapons. There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your own judgment to choose the best one:

Possible Responses to an Attack:

No resistance - Not resisting might be the proper choice in each situation. An attacker with a gun or a knife may put you in a situation where you think it is safer to do what he or she says.

Stalling for time - Appear to go along with the attacker. This might give you time to assess the situation. When their guard is down, try to escape.

Distraction and then flight - Obviously you should try to get away - but whether you can depend on your shoes, clothing, your physical stamina, the terrain and how close your attacker is.

Verbal assertiveness - If someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands in front of you and yell, "Stop" or "Stay Back!"

Physical resistance - If you decide to respond physically, remember that your priority is to get away. Act quickly and decisively to throw the attacker off guard while you escape. Be sure to make an effort to get an accurate description of your attacker(s). Even the smallest details may give authorities a clue to finding the suspect.

Questions about the content of this safety guide should be directed to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Division of Right of Way & Utilities.