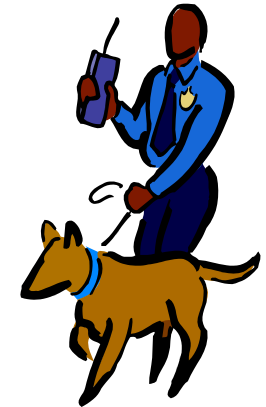


Safety Guidelines

for
Field Personnel
and Home Visitors



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Preface

The purpose of this booklet is to provide an **overview** of safety practices for Renville County employees as they perform their job duties in the community. Appropriate safety measures begin with the knowledge of the type of hazards that may exist- human, animal, biological, chemical, physical, etc. from a Minnesota perspective. No set of rules, procedures and/or training can cover all possible circumstances that may be encountered. This booklet is not intended to take the place of the extensive training provided to Law Enforcement, Public Works, Health and Human Service workers. It does not attempt to cover hazards or responses associated with terrorism.

Please use this booklet to help facilitate discussions about safety between supervisors and co-workers. Additional safety measures and policies may exist within individual divisions or departments. Contact your supervisor for specific requirements.

Renville County employees must rely on sound judgment, communication, and common sense to safely fulfill their tasks in the community. When in doubt, act on the side of safety.

Much thanks to the City of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota for the majority of this booklet. Renville County Safety Committee adapted it for our needs. If you have comments or suggestions about the booklet, please contact a safety committee member.

If you have questions regarding County policies related to safety issues, please contact:

Human Resources at (320) 523-3753.

Revised 07/21/2011

More information about biological, chemical, and radioactive hazards can be found on the following websites:

- Minnesota Department of Health, www.health.state.mn.us
- Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov
- Occupational Safety and Health Admin, www.osha.gov
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov

Remember -

Safety First,

Safety Always!

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- Bottles or containers connected with rubber hosing and duct tape
- Funnels, hosing and clamps
- Coffee filters, pillow cases or bed sheets stained red (used to filter red phosphorous), or containing a white powdery residue
- Apartments or buildings may smell like chemicals - sweet, bitter, ammonia, or solvent odors.

An individual who believes they have discovered an illegal drug lab or the site of an abandoned lab should immediately notify 911 and should not enter the area of the suspected lab. Anyone who inadvertently enters a lab should back out immediately without disturbing the cooking process.

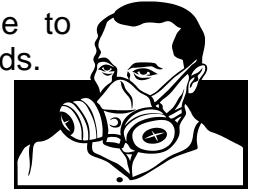
➤ Other Hazards

There are many types of potential health and life safety hazards. Be sure to use all six senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, and intuition) before entering a site and at all times be alert. Look for potential hazards that may be located in front of you, to the side, above and below. Field personnel may come upon downed electrical wires, collapsed septic tanks or other buried items, unsafe structures, splitting tree branches, as well as other safety hazards during the normal course of business. Expect the unexpected and be prepared so you remain safe.



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- Some other signs of hazards includes lead jackets around glass containers (often indicates radioactive materials), informal warning labels with names of contents (Uranium, Cesium, Hydrochloric Acids, Muriatic Acid (pool chemicals), etc.
- Contact 911 for immediate response to Chemical or Radioactive Spills or Hazards.

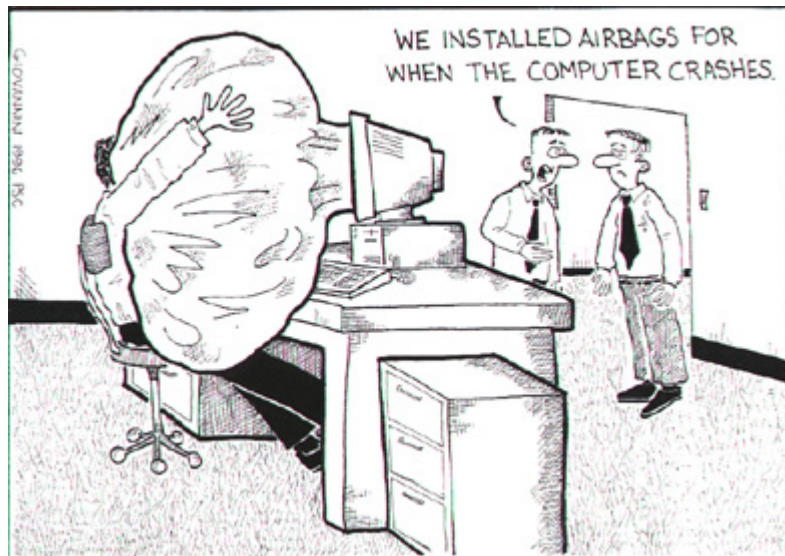


➤ Methamphetamine Laboratories

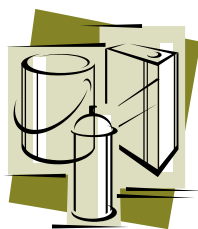
Methamphetamine labs can be found in a variety of locations, such as houses, apartments, hotels, vehicles, wooded areas, or other buildings. Methamphetamine is made from common, easily available materials using one of several basic chemical processes. During the cooking process, chemicals can be deposited on surfaces and household belongings. A dangerous by-product, such as phosphine gas, may be formed during the manufacturing of this drug.

The following situations may exist at a meth lab:

- Access is denied to landlords, neighbors, and other visitors.
- Windows are covered or blacked-out.
- Other security measures such as cameras or baby monitors are located outside of buildings.
- Burn pits, stained soil or dead vegetation indicating dumping of chemicals or waste.
- Waste in trash, pits or piles, such as:
 - Packaging from over-the-counter ephedrine or pseudo ephedrine cold, diet or allergy pills
 - Empty containers from antifreeze, white gas, ether, starting fluids, Freon, lye or drain openers, paint thinner, acetone, or alcohol
 - Anhydrous ammonia tanks, propane tanks, or coolers containing anhydrous ammonia
 - Pyrex / glass / Corning containers, with dried chemical deposits remaining



➤ Chemical or Radioactive Hazardous Materials



When working in the field, it is possible that employees may encounter chemical or radioactive materials. Chemicals exist in many environments and exposure could occur during routine business inspections, on construction sites, nuisance investigations and even in the office environment.

Since these materials are often difficult and expensive to dispose of, they may be found at recycling centers or illegal dump sites. A rule of thumb is to consider all chemicals as hazardous until verified by labeling or Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

- A diamond shape label identifies the system. It identifies the hazards of a material and the degree of severity of the health, flammability, and reactivity (instability) hazards. Hazard severity is indicated by a numerical rating that ranges from zero (0) indicating a minimal hazard, to four (4) indicating a severe hazard. They are color-coded as follows: blue for health, red for flammability, and yellow for reactivity (instability).
- Any warning labels with numbers of (2), (3), or (4) require precautions.
- Chemicals should not be handled until appropriate Personal Protective Equipment is available.
- If available, refer to an Emergency Response Guidebook to aid identification and precautions of hazardous materials.
- Other hazards of gas, odors, dusts, fumes, mists, animal droppings, carbon monoxide, asbestos, lead, etc. require universal precautions until verified.



I. Introduction

This booklet contains an overview of a wide variety of information to introduce Renville County employees to potential hazards in the field environment. Although the majority of field personnel or home visitors rarely encounter a hazardous situation during their career, it is important to know the potential hazards and to be prepared to prevent and properly manage a potentially dangerous situation if necessary. Safety first!

➤ Code of Conduct

When contacting the public, employees should keep in mind that they represent Renville County and may influence the attitudes and behavior of the public. Some basic performance etiquette is provided below:

- ❑ Wear a County uniform or have County Identification visible.
- ❑ Present a friendly, courteous, and professional attitude at all times.
- ❑ Communication should be positive. Refrain from giving opinions. Remember your customer service skills.
- ❑ Explaining, listening, and asking are an important part of good communication. The customer and employee must understand the purpose of the contact and what is expected of each other.
- ❑ Employees should remain calm, regardless of provocation. Remember, it is okay to walk away from situations that appear unsafe or unhealthy.
- ❑ Be courteous and obey all traffic laws when driving.

➤ **Definitions**

Restricted parcel of land - Property either fenced in or posted “do not enter.”

Occupied building or structure - A structure that clearly has personal belongings or business inventory present.

Owner - A person (human being, corporation, partnership), or agent thereof having or holding title to a parcel of land, and in control of all or part of the building or structures thereon.

Tenant - A person (human being, corporation, partnership), or agent thereof who rents or leases from an owner, and is in control of all or part of a building or structure.

II. Office Safety and Preparation

➤ **Personal Safety in the Office**

Field personnel and home visitors often spend time in the office. The following guidelines summarize some safety measures to implement while in the office environment.



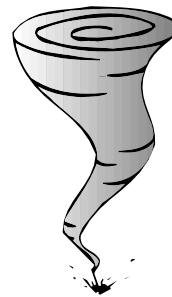
1. Alert your colleagues when you notice strangers in your area.
2. Escort customers, vendors, and strangers. Do not allow them to roam unattended.
3. Have vendors show proper ID.
4. Do not leave personal property out in open view. Lock it away.
5. Inform others if you are about to meet with a potentially violent customer. Take a co-worker or law enforcement along when meeting with a potentially violent customer. Establish a code or alarm system to alert coworkers when law enforcement may be required or desired.

Severe Weather Alert

Employees should be aware of weather conditions and the Severe Weather Safety Plan Policy. During a weather emergency (i.e. sirens) or weather alert, employees must seek shelter to protect themselves. Office employees must proceed to designated shelter area when warning is announced.

Become aware of shelters available throughout the county where you could go for protection and safety.

Tornado / Severe Weather Tips



- **On the road:** Get out of your car. Take shelter in a ditch. Do not try to outrun a tornado or drive at right angles to the tornado. If the main danger is from lightening, stay in your car.
- **Outside:** Never take shelter under a tree. Get into a ditch, gully or other low-lying area. Roll yourself into a ball rather than spread out on the ground to reduce your vulnerability to lightening.

➤ **Biological Hazards**

Exposure to biological hazards may result in illness, injury, or even death. Some biological hazards that may be encountered in the field include human or animal body fluids (blood, secretions, etc.), feces, mold, insects or rodents, dead carcasses, organisms, and many other items. Do not touch syringes or other items that may be contaminated. Use personal protective equipment per your department’s training for your safety. If in doubt, contact Public Health or 911.



- If you are bitten by domestic or wild animal, contact your supervisor immediately. Appropriate cleansing and medical attention is necessary.

➤ Weather

Employees should be aware of the weather conditions. The weather can change rapidly and sometimes be extreme.

Hot Weather

Hot and humid weather may not be dramatic, but exertion of field work can lead to problems like fainting, heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Be aware of the symptoms of heat stress and take the appropriate precautions.

1. Limit the number and duration of exposure, postponing nonessential tasks of heavy exertion.
2. Hydrate prior to working in hot and humid weather.
3. Drink a glass of water or some other non-caffeinated beverage every 15-20 minutes while on the job.
4. Wear loose, light-colored clothes.
5. Maintain a realistic work schedule.
6. Use sunscreen.
7. Wear a hat with a wide brim that protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose and scalp.
8. Wear sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays.
9. Limit direct sun exposure.



6. If you hear noise from a room indicating escalation that could lead to violence, ask a colleague or supervisor to come out for a consultation, or say there is a long distance call on another phone. This will allow time for an assessment of a potentially serious situation.
7. Document any danger, threats, uncomfortable situations, etc., that occur. Discuss the incident with your supervisor and determine if the incident should be reported to the Sheriff's Office.

➤ Preparation for Field Work

Proper preparations and communications with your office can make fieldwork safer. Here is a list of helpful tips to prepare for fieldwork.



1. Make your daily work schedule accessible to your department. Let the office know your work assignment schedule. If you have an In / Out board, use it. If you have a computerized calendar, "share" your schedule with the office.
2. Keep the address / customer file updated.
3. If a visit is in an unfamiliar location, ask a staff member who may be familiar with the location to brief you regarding any known risk or possible hazards.
4. Consider requesting that the first meeting take place in the office or a common area of the building that you are visiting.
5. Ask for precise driving instructions and consult a map before leaving the office.
6. **If you sensed that a situation was uncomfortable or unsafe, discuss a plan of action with your supervisor before your next visit to the site.** Any incident or circumstance that makes staff uncomfortable in a location or on a home visit should be reported to your supervisor or law enforcement immediately.

Examples of such situations include unsecured weapons, drugs or drug paraphernalia, unsecured pet, customer or family members who are threatening you or each other and a residence where illegal activities appear to be taking place.

7. When possible, contact the customer ahead of the visit so he/she will be watching for your arrival. Be cautious when pre-arranging to meet a customer since it allows the customer to prepare for your visit and possible attack.
8. Take County identification with you. It is preferable to wear or display identification.
9. If you are conducting after-hour visits or inspections (before or after normal working hours or on weekends), let the office or law enforcement know your schedule such as time of appointment, arrival time, anticipated amount of time on-site, and when you depart from the site. Some examples of after-hour field work include home visits, child protection investigations, disease investigations, or response to health emergencies. Inform law enforcement of investigation type. If law enforcement needs to respond they can take necessary precautions.
10. Wear appropriate clothing for your work assignment, taking into account employee appearance standards. People will more likely treat you professionally if you are dressed professionally.
11. Call into the office periodically to let people (your supervisor or administrative assistant) know where you are and how you are doing.
12. Take a cell phone or county radio along.
13. Request law enforcement or a co-worker's assistance when meeting with customers that are potentially violent or have a history of violent behavior.

- If the above steps do not deter the dog, use your available tools to subdue the dog such as...
 - A raised knee to the chest often stuns a dog.
 - Put something between you and the dog. Use your coat, purse, bag, or other object to separate yourself from the dog.
 - Keep retreating to a safe area.
 - Call out for assistance.
- If a dog attacks...
 - Protect your head. If you are knocked down, cover your head and ears with your hands and curl into a ball. Try not to move or scream.
 - Care for any wounds. Wash any wound with soap and water and seek medical attention.
 - Report the attack to law enforcement. Try to remember as much as possible about the attack.



Wild Animals and Pests



- When entering fields, wetlands, or areas where mosquitoes or ticks are present, be sure to take precautions such as appropriate clothing, tucking pants in socks or wear boots, repellents, etc.
- Take appropriate measures if snakes or other wildlife hazards exist.
- Be alert for other animal hazards such as bats, raccoons, skunks and other animals that could transmit rabies.
- Do not approach sick animals. Contact law enforcement.

techniques to avoid animal bites or disease transmission. Some safety tips are provided below for working safely with critters.

Dogs

- Watch for animal signs such as “beware of dog”. Make sure a dog is not present before approaching the residence.
- Listen for the sound of a barking or growling dog.
- Do not encroach upon an animal’s territory.
 - If an animal is tied on a chain, be sure of the length of the chain to avoid entering into their territory.
 - Look for signs of an invisible fence.
 - Pay particular attention if you enter a fenced in area when approaching a front door.
- Do not approach an unsupervised animal regardless of whether it appears friendly.
- If a dog approaches you. . .
 - Look for signs of aggressiveness.
 - Take off your sunglasses.
 - Stop and stay still. Don’t smile and bare your teeth.
 - Speak softly, try not to show fear.
 - Allow the animal to sniff you.
- If an occupant or owner enters, ask the occupant to contain his / her animal(s) prior to conducting your inspection.
- If a dog charges you...
 - Stop until the animal stops moving; do not run screaming from a dog.
 - Do not threaten the dog with hitting or kicking gestures.
 - Back away slowly, do not turn your back on a dog.

➤ **Personal Safety in the Home or Community**

1. Do not wear expensive jewelry
2. Carry a briefcase instead of a purse
3. Wear flat shoes or boots. Avoid open toe or open back shoes.
4. Do not remove your shoes in a home. If your shoes are muddy or dirty, put on shoe coverings while in the home.
5. Limit the amount of cash you carry. Avoid carrying credit cards.
6. Leave the environment if your instincts tell you to!
7. Avoid the kitchen area (potential weapons—knives, pans, hot water, etc.)
8. Do not sit if the client stands. Follow the client (do not let them follow you).
9. Know where the doors and exits are for an escape route, and try to keep between your clients and the route to safety.
10. Know where your clients are at all times. Attempt to keep the client within the room and conversation. Do not follow them into another room.

III. Customer Management

➤ **Vehicle Use**

When using a County or personal vehicle for your field visit, it is important to be courteous and practice good driving techniques. The following list contains some ideas to help keep your vehicle experience safe.

1. When approaching your vehicle, be aware of your surroundings. Before entering your vehicle, check to see if anyone has entered it and is hiding in the back seat.
2. Approach your car with keys in hand.
3. Lock vehicle doors at all times, even when driving.
4. Do not leave the keys in the vehicle, or leave the vehicle running even to warm it up in cold weather.

5. Keep valuables out of sight.
6. Avoid sharp objects and broken glass that could flatten a tire.
7. Park where you can see your vehicle from inside the place you are visiting. Try to park in front of the site you are visiting.
8. Choose a parking space that is well lit or in an open area that offers the safest walking route to the site. Look at the surroundings before you get out of the vehicle. Be aware of environmental hazards such as ice patches or animals.
9. Park in the direction you want to go upon leaving the site you are visiting. Back in or park in a drive through parking space where possible. Try to park so your vehicle cannot be blocked in. These tips will help you leave an area quickly if needed.
10. As you leave your vehicle, be confident and walk purposefully toward your destination.
11. Wear your seatbelt.
12. Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition, has sufficient fuel (such as one-half tank of gasoline), oil, window washer fluid, and properly inflated tires (and spare).
13. Develop a system for periodic vehicle safety checks for County vehicles, as well as your private vehicle.
14. Do not use a cell phone while driving. Pull over in a safe area to make or receive phone calls.
15. In the county vehicle, ensure the first aid kit and winter survival kit is located in the vehicle and properly supplied with basics. Check supplies periodically for expiration dates.
16. Be courteous to other drivers and pedestrians. Call 911 to report dangerous situations.
17. Obey all traffic laws.



- *Avoid confrontation, stay calm*
- *Verify understanding*
- *Let them suggest a solution*
- *Call for back-up*

➤ **Pre-attack Cues**

Recognizing some common traits of hostile or aggressive individuals is important in assessing the risk of a situation. A person exhibiting the following behaviors or actions may be getting agitated and may become violent.

1. Moves to a bladed foot position, i.e. stand sideways, with one shoulder towards you.
2. Moving into a 'ready to spring' position, i.e. knees bent and upper body bent forward.
3. Clenches and unclenches a fist. Always know where the hands of your clients are.
4. Shifts his / her shoulders back
5. Does a target glance, i.e. looks at a portion of your anatomy (which indicates that you're too close).
6. Gives a directional look to get you to look the other way.
7. Gives you an intimidating stare. May give you the "1,000 yard stare", looking past you and for an exit to use after he harms you.
8. Rocks back and forth, or up and down or has similar compulsive body movements.
9. Defeat. Unusually accepting, relaxing or succumbing can be an indicator of preparation for an attack.

IV. Other Field Hazards

Animals and Pests

Field personnel or home visitors may encounter domestic animals, wild animals, insects or other pests. It is important to understand simple



1. Speak **slowly** and **quietly**.
2. Look the party in the eyes and be firm, but not confrontational.
3. Call the person "Sir" or "Ma'am" and continue to treat them with respect. Try to not raise your voice to this person.
4. Hear the person out. Allow him/her to vent.
5. Reinforce the positive long-term benefits of your assistance, your commitment to their best interests, and your role as their ally.
6. Ask questions and let silence do the rest.
7. If the person continues to focus on what he/she cannot have, switch the focus. Provide an insistent, persistent message. Get back to the issue at hand.
8. Tell them "if you have any questions, sir/ma'am, please call me or my supervisor." Give them your business card with your supervisor's name and phone number on the back of the card.
9. If you have a cell phone, portable radio or other communication device, hold it in your hand so that the person knows you have it.
10. Do not tolerate irrational behavior or nonsense. Leave the situation.
11. If the person in question is violent, don't turn your back on him/her. Instead, "back" yourself to the door. Advise them nonchalantly that someone is expecting you. Notify law enforcement of the incident.
12. When all else fails, leave the situation. Drive away calmly and safely; don't spin your tires or speed when you drive away. If you need to calm down, drive to a safe place and regain your composure. Rely on your supervisor or coworkers for support.

Remember:

- *90-95% of people can be "talked down"*
- *Listen to the grievance*
- *Listen actively and empathetically*

Road Rage

In the past few years, cases of road rage have received more publicity. The following tips will help prevent you from becoming a victim of road rage.

1. Obey posted speed limits and traffic laws.
2. If you see someone driving recklessly, call 911 with a description for the car and the license plate number.
3. Anticipate the moves of other drivers; keep safe distances to allow for driving corrections.
4. Do not make eye contact with an irate driver.
5. Do not confront, verbally or physically, an upset driver.
6. If you feel another driver was rude, do not make hand gestures, yell, or take retaliatory driving actions. Ex. Someone recklessly cuts in front of you
7. If another motorist is following you, do not drive home. Call 911 and give your location. Drive to a place where there are many people, like a convenience store or to a safe place, like a Law Enforcement Center or Police Station.

Winter Driving

It is important to be prepared in case you are stranded in a blizzard or cold temperatures. Frost bite or injuries may occur if you are exposed to extreme cold temperatures even for a short while. In some cases, the extent of time you could be trapped in cold weather could be longer. The following tips will help you manage a situation in winter weather where help may not be nearby:

1. Scrape and defrost windows before driving your vehicle.
2. Wear appropriate winter-wear, such as coat, gloves, hat, scarf, boots, etc.
3. Carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle that contains items such as first aid supplies, blanket, a flashlight with extra batteries, a shovel and quick energy foods such as dried nuts or fruits or nutrition bars.

4. Make sure your cell phone batteries are charged.
5. Be aware of your location when driving during snowfall, in case you have to call for help. When in doubt, stay in the office or at home.
6. If you are caught in a blizzard, pull over as far as possible and turn on the four-way flashers to avoid being hit by another motorist. Do not leave your vehicle.
7. If you are stuck after the storm subsides, call for help but stay with the vehicle.

➤ **Awareness of Your Environment**

Always be aware of your environment. “The thing that will hurt you is the thing that surprises you,” says Sheriff Scott Hable. Recognizing a potential problem and avoiding it is the best safety tactic.

1. Be alert and observant. Develop a sense of awareness of your immediate environment. Is anything out of the ordinary?
2. If people are loitering on the street or sidewalk, walk around them or walk to the other side of the street if you feel threatened.
3. If you are verbally confronted, maintain a professional manner and don’t attempt to answer verbal challenges.
4. Pay attention to warnings signs such as “No Trespassing” or “Beware of Dogs” as they may be indications of the resident’s attitude toward strangers.
5. Look for activities on the property including:
 - Hear activity inside the home or lights are on, but no one answers the door. This may indicate the residents do not welcome visitors.
 - Look for evidence of a dog.

6. Have one employee do all of the writing and note taking. This will leave the other employee free to focus on the visit and the safety concerns.
7. Let each other know if you feel something is wrong or if you believe you are in an unsafe situation.
8. Document all actions and conversations during the visit and review them with each other afterwards. If you were involved in a hostile situation, document exactly what happened and how you felt. Be very specific. Discuss the situation with your supervisor and determine if law enforcement should be involved.
9. Carry a cell phone or portable radio with you at all times.
10. Know where your clients are at all times. Attempt to keep the client within the room and conversation. Do not follow them into another room.

Anger Management Information

Although threats or attacks on field personnel or home visitors are rare, it is important to be informed about anger management and prepared for potential attacks in order to prevent or manage dangerous situations. Some common anger management information is provided in the following text.

➤ **De-escalation Techniques**

Some individuals communication style includes talking loudly or angrily to vent their frustrations. However, when individuals begin to make their communications personal towards another individual, quick assessment of the situation and appropriate response must be made. The following are simple techniques that may be useful to de-escalate hostile situations.



➤ **Emergency Entry of Property, Buildings or Structures**

If an emergency situation occurs (i.e. sewer back up, a significant water line break, etc.) and one of the following situations exists, the County employee must call 911 and have law enforcement with the situation.



- An employee needs to access an unoccupied residence.
- If there is only a minor present.
- If suspicious activity is taking place or appears to have taken place.
- If an occupant is in immediate danger.

➤ **Partner Field Visits**

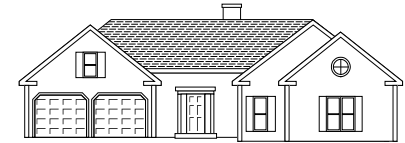
Working with a partner is not the normal mode of operation. However, in certain situations having a partner or law enforcement assist you on a field or home visits may be crucial (i.e. previous threats, ongoing litigation, etc.). Having a partner with you during field or home visits allows another set of eyes and ears to watch over the situation, which makes it easier to identify potential problems and safety concerns. The following guidelines will assist safety when working with a partner.

1. Evaluate the situation together prior to conducting your visit.
2. Have a plan of action prepared for both of you in the event of a problem situation.
3. Park your vehicle in such a way that it will be easy to leave the area should a problem arise.
4. Keep an eye on each other and stay together.
5. Work together to keep the situation calm and focused. If a customer becomes agitated, separate yourselves and stand on opposite sides of him / her. This will redirect their focus and help calm the situation.

- Look for evidence of biological, chemical or other hazards.
- Look for drawn shades, blocked out windows, surveillance cameras, or baby monitors, which may indicate paranoid or secluded behaviors.

6. Before knocking on the door, place a foot against the screen door to hold it shut in the event there is a dog inside.
7. Before knocking on the door, pause and listen to the activity inside the dwelling. If you hear loud quarreling, fighting, or other disturbances **leave immediately and call somebody.**

➤ **Access to Property**



The following are guidelines for entry into buildings and structures.

1. Inform or contact the owner of the intent to enter his/her parcel of land or property or meet them on-site. Some exceptions to this include access on easements. **Remember: Employees should have County identification displayed on them and/or wear County uniforms.**
2. Do not enter a restricted parcel (i.e. one with no trespassing signs) of land without permission, such as a waiver of trespassing or verbal permission.
3. Only enter **occupied buildings or structures when a legal adult (18 years or older)** property owner, agent of the property owner, tenant or agent of the tenant is present. Entry requests where the requestor has provided a "lock box" or has made other special arrangements for entry without a legal adult representative being present must be denied. (Some exceptions exist for immediate health or safety hazards or emergencies.)

4. Entry requests may be accepted for **unoccupied buildings or structures** where the owner has provided a “lock box” or made other special arrangements for entry. Such entries may be conducted without the legal adult representative being present.
5. Consider notifying law enforcement of entry into unoccupied buildings or structures or onto restricted parcels to prevent a suspicious person report or law enforcement response.



Remember:

Unless there is an immediate emergency situation, field personnel should not enter a building or structure where a child/minor is present and a legal adult is not present. In emergencies, call 911.

➤ **Entry into Homes, Buildings or Structures**

Employees must initiate contact with a customer by first identifying themselves as a representative of the County stating the department or division they represent and asking to speak with the property owner or the owner’s representative. County identification must be presented.



1. If an owner or a responsible party is not present, leave your card and ask for the owner to call you to make an appointment.
2. Briefly state the purpose of the visit. If access to the property is necessary, stop and evaluate if you should enter or make an appointment for a future date. Come back with reinforcements (supervisor, law enforcement, etc.) if necessary.
3. Pay close attention to the activities inside the building before entering.

- Do not enter if you feel any unsafe conditions exist. If you have a “bad feeling” about the situation, leave immediately, contact your supervisor, and make a plan of action.
 - If it appears that the customer has been drinking alcohol or using other drugs prior to or during the field visit, reschedule the field visit. Assess the situation with your supervisor before returning to the property.
 - If you are threatened directly or receive implied threats, remain calm and assess the best way to exit the situation.
4. If you decide it is safe to enter, you must request permission.
 - If permission is denied, leave your card and ask to make an appointment when it is more convenient for them.
 - If permission is granted, proceed with your duties.
 5. Be alert to your surroundings.
 - Do not go into a dark room (or basement or attic) first. Have the customer go first and turn on the light. Follow; never lead even if you have been to the dwelling before. Try to position your body so your back is never turned to the person(s).
 - While it is legal to have a firearm in the house, its casual display is inappropriate during a professional visit or consultation. If you see a firearm, become aware of one in the room, or if someone is armed, leave immediately. Notify your supervisor and discuss the situation.
 - Look for signs of biological, chemical, or other hazards.
 6. If you need to retrieve something from inside, knock again or say “hello” when you return.
 7. If a heated family argument erupts, leave the customer’s building. Inform the customer of your return visit plans.

