

Association of Real Estate Agents Trinidad and Tobago (AREA)

COVID-19 Protocols for Real Estate Sector

Showing a Property to Buyers

Whether you are a Buyer or Seller, it's important to know that many homes and properties have traditionally been purchased and sold without visiting or hosting an open house, but it is normal, professional real estate practice to have interested buyers make private showing requests and schedule individual visits to a property that's for sale. Buying land or a home is a major capital expense and should never be undertaken lightly. Buying is done at the risk of the investor, hence the old motto "Caveat Emptor".

When viewing a property, please follow these instructions:

When scheduling a viewing, ask if any occupants of the property or the prospect and his party, or the attending agent has or had any signs of illness, or if any have a recent travel history. If an illness is identified or suspected, do not view the property.

Prospects with children should be asked if possible to leave them at home rather than bring them to the viewing and unnecessarily expose them to risk of infection.

Any agent showing a property should keep a log of all persons involved, their contact information and the date of the viewing so that tracing can be done should it become necessary.

Request that sellers leave the property with all lights turned on and doors opened, including closets, bathrooms, bedrooms and basements so that visitors do not need to touch door knobs.

All parties are required to wear PPE masks covering their mouth and nose when meeting, showing or viewing a property.

Upon entry, view a property with your hands in your pockets to prevent touching any parts of the interior of a property. Use stairway handrails only if needed. Do not touch door knobs. Regardless of the above the agent will ensure that he and the buyers all use a sanitizer before entering the property and again upon exiting.

Parents of young children, should preferably view property without their children as the surest way to protect them from exposure, however, if not possible, this is particularly important since many children enjoy walking around and touching areas of a house as they explore. It is important for parents to keep their children close and for children to see parents practicing safe viewing protocols. Encourage children to mimic what the adults are doing as a game.

If children do not need to enter the home, and there are two parents or adult guardians at the property, then **each adult may view the property individually, one at a time**, and the other can take turns watching and entertaining the children in the exterior yard or family vehicle. Keeping children safe is a priority. Children are allowed inside a property with proper adult supervision.

Observe Social Distancing, maintain 6 to 10 feet between persons viewing a property.

Do not congregate around entrances or doorways. This causes people to be less than 6 to 10 feet of distance as people enter and exit rooms. Stand in open areas or corner of rooms and keep masks on at all times.

Do not enter or occupy a room with people other than those people you are currently living with at your current home.

Real estate agents should allow a buyer(s) to enter a room, unaccompanied. Only after the buyer(s) exit a room, should the real estate agent enter to view the room. Or vice versa.

Stand 6 to 10 feet from doorways so that the buyer(s) can enter and exit a room freely while maintaining social distancing.

When standing outside the property and walking the exterior grounds, maintain 10 feet social distancing.

Provide the list of COVID-19 Protocols to any showing agents or prospects and remind them throughout the viewing to maintain 6 to 10 feet social distancing and control how many people enter a room at one time.

All Real Estate Agents and Visitors to offices or properties are REQUIRED TO WEAR PPE MASKS covering their mouth and nose, at all times, when viewing a property.

Sanitizing of hands shall be mandatory prior to entering a property and immediately upon vacating a property.

Disclosure of Protocols for Health & pertaining to Real Estate Services is to inform you of the measures recommended to address the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic and dangers inherent in meeting with clients and prospects and showing properties at a time when Stay at Home and Social Distancing restrictions are in place.

These Protocols shall be implemented as soon as it is determined that Real Estate Services can resume. The Protocols may become outdated or differ from any new or updated government response and guidance for the health and safety of the general public and for that reason will be updated for the benefit of members as necessary.

All citizens, consumers and real estate practitioners are to always follow government guidelines which shall take precedent over any other recommendations. This guide may be updated or amended from time to time to comply with best practices, industry standards, government regulations or guidelines, and recommendations from health experts including The Ministry of Health, Chief Medical Officer, The World Health Organization (WHO) and The Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

In accordance with the guidelines to limit people gathering in groups, and to comply with the "social distancing" requirements by our health departments and government, COVID-19 protocols shall advise all real estate professionals, clients and buyers to schedule individual showing appointments to visit a property.

It is recommended that the use of VIRTUAL SHOWINGS online be encouraged (for all parties) as a first stage of engagement, especially for prospects who may be sick, showing any signs of illness or simply prefer not to personally visit a property.

Real Estate practitioners shall not attend or host a public open house, especially while government requests for social distancing are in effect. When personally visiting a property, please follow the guideline below.

Quick Guidelines & Recommendations for a Healthy and Safe Real Estate Experience

- **Virtual Showings and Live Virtual Walk-throughs are recommended**
- **All parties are required to wear appropriate PPE masks covering their mouth and nose** when meeting, showing or viewing a property.
- **Follow all government orders and safety guidelines**
- **Suspending of all open house events**
- **Should a buyer, seller or occupant of a property being sold be sick, do not show or view that property.** For at least 14 days after the person exhibited symptoms
- **Greet people with a wave and smile;** please do not “shake hands” or “fist bump.”
- **Observe social distancing requirements and guidelines** and maintain 6 or more feet of separation when walking through a property.
- **No congregating at the entrance to a property** give space and observe social distancing. When access is granted, enter the property one at a time, while continuing to observe social distancing during your walk through.
- **Owners or Tenants must vacate the premises for viewings and leave all lights turned on and doors opened,** including closets, bathrooms, bedrooms and storage etc., so that visitors do not need to touch door knobs, light switches or any surfaces
- **Prohibit the touching of surfaces, doors or door knobs if at all possible.** This reduces risk and will keep properties safer.
- **Properties must be sanitized before and after every viewing**
- **Shoes are to be left outside or be sanitized prior to entry into the property** to prevent external contamination from being brought in on the soles of shoes
- **Prohibit food and/or drinks from entering a property.**
- **Prohibit the use bathrooms or faucets** whenever possible while visiting a property.
- **Question the prospect as to possible exposure risk within the prior 14 days** to determine potential risk to all parties present.
- **Deny entry and reschedule viewing** if the client/prospect is questioned and determined to have been in contact with anyone exhibiting symptoms of any illness within the past 14 days.

Agents must remove themselves from service for a period of at least 14 days if they have been in contact with anyone found to develop any symptoms of illness within 14 days of their contact with that person or if the agent themselves develops any symptoms of illness.

Additional Guidance information

- Ministry of Health Trinidad and Tobago: <http://www.health.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=293>
- Association of Real Estate Agents of Trinidad and Tobago (AREA): <https://www.areatt.com/>
- World Health Organization (WHO): <https://covid19.who.int/>
- CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/covid19>