

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
November 16, 2011



Real Estate Board Launches Realty Watch in Central Okanagan

Kelowna, BC - The Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board (OMREB) and the RCMP are pleased to announce the Central Okanagan launch of Realty Watch with 800 REALTORS® now available to assist police as extra 'eyes and ears' in their communities.

A community crime prevention and emergency assistance program operating in British Columbia since 1994, Realty Watch has expanded from the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board to the Chilliwack, Greater Vancouver, Victoria and Okanagan Mainline boards, and is now supported by 15,000 REALTORS® in the province.

The partnership between REALTORS® and police agencies, Realty Watch is also a partner agency of Amber Alert, and has two components:

1. REALTORS® observe and report to police a suspicious activity they may encounter during their day-to-day business.
2. REALTORS® respond to a police activated fan-out to search for missing or abducted children, vulnerable adults (e.g. has a physical or mental condition that puts them at high risk if not found soon), and seniors, or suspicious vehicles.

"Seeing the success of the Realty Watch network across the Lower Mainland, OMREB is thrilled to be announcing our pilot Realty Watch program in the Central Okanagan with the participation of members from Peachland to Lake Country," explains OMREB President George Cwiklewski. "We are pleased to be working with the RCMP on this worthwhile community endeavour."

OMREB's Realty Watch Chair Brenda Moshansky, herself a REALTOR® and the Past President of the Board, says one of the objectives of the cooperative effort between police and the real estate industry is to stop crime before it happens.

"Most property crimes are committed weekdays between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm, a time when REALTORS® are traveling through residential and commercial areas, conducting their regular business routine," she notes. "This puts them in a unique position to observe crimes about to happen or already in progress."

Noting that the RCMP continues to engage and partner with people and organizations in communities to make them even better places to live, Sgt. Ann Morrison of the Kelowna RCMP detachment is excited about the local launch of Realty Watch.

"The RCMP is grateful to the Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board and its membership for partnering with and assisting law enforcement through Realty Watch," she says. "With 800 REALTOR® connected to this program in the Central Okanagan, Realty Watch will be an additional and valuable tool in the search for missing persons. The program works and has been very successful in other jurisdictions in the province."

How a Fan-Out Will Work

To conduct fan-outs to its members, OMREB will utilize the Touchbase text messaging system which has a mobile application and provides numerous member-to-member communications and safety benefits, allowing individual REALTORS® to message other individual members, and the Board to message groups on a Board-wide or city by city basis.

In the pilot phase, the OMREB's Realty Watch program will focus on the Central Okanagan where there are 800 member REALTORS®. However, as the majority of OMREB's membership from Peachland to Revelstoke is already familiar with and using Touchbase on a daily basis, they will all be included in most fan-outs to provide optimum awareness up and down the Valley. When the program is in full swing, it will be rolled out Board-wide to include the North Okanagan and Shuswap Zones, and the RCMP detachments in those communities, for the full support and participation of OMREB's 1,100 member REALTORS®.

Any Realty Watch fan-out alert must be initiated by the RCMP and can only be sent by Board staff to OMREB members. Within minutes, REALTORS® will receive the text message on their cell phones or PDAs. If photos are pertinent and available, members will be directed to the Board's internal MLS® Home Page for a news pop-up linked to the RCMP media release.

In the case of abductions, the RCMP will contact OMREB to request a fan-out alert – usually for a missing person. Any REALTOR® who receives that fan-out, and sees or hears anything that could help police with the case is expected to call 250-762-3300 or 911 (whichever number is stipulated in the alert), identify themselves as a REALTOR® responding to an alert, and ask to share information with an officer in charge.

If the case is resolved, the police will again contact the Board to send out a cancellation of the alert to REALTORS® via the fan-out process. Missing persons fan-out cases are often solved within six to 24 hours of the fan-out alert, so it is typical to send out a cancellation shortly after the initial fan-out.

The Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board is comprised of 1,111 member REALTORS® and 91 real estate offices in the Southern Interior of BC, and the Board area covers the Central Okanagan, North Okanagan and Shuswap – from Peachland to Revelstoke. The Central Zone of OMREB covers an area from Peachland to Lake Country and east along Highway 33 to Westbridge (including the Christian Valley).

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For more information:

Brenda Moshansky, Realty Watch Chair
OMREB Past President
bmoshansky@shaw.ca

(250) 860-7500

Jan Bauman, Realty Watch Coordinator
OMREB Communications
jbauman@omreb.com

(250) 491-4560, Ext 224



REALTY WATCH QUICK FACTS:

- **Realty Watch** was launched in BC's Lower Mainland in 1994 to help make communities safer and stronger.
- **Realty Watch** in BC helped Police locate two missing children and, one vulnerable senior, and was responsible for the arrest of two people wanted by police.
- Only Police can activate **Realty Watch** in time critical situations like abducted, missing or lost people, or if the public is in immediate danger posed by a person or vehicle.
- When Police contact your Board's **Realty Watch** coordinator, a text message or email can be sent to all local **REALTORS'** cell phones and PDAs asking them to be on the lookout.
- In British Columbia, more than 15,000 **REALTORS'** are now participating in community **Realty Watch** programs.
- Other Real Estate Boards in the province will soon be following suit and launching **Realty Watch** programs with Police in their own communities.
- Realty Watch is a partner agency of **Amber Alert**.

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:



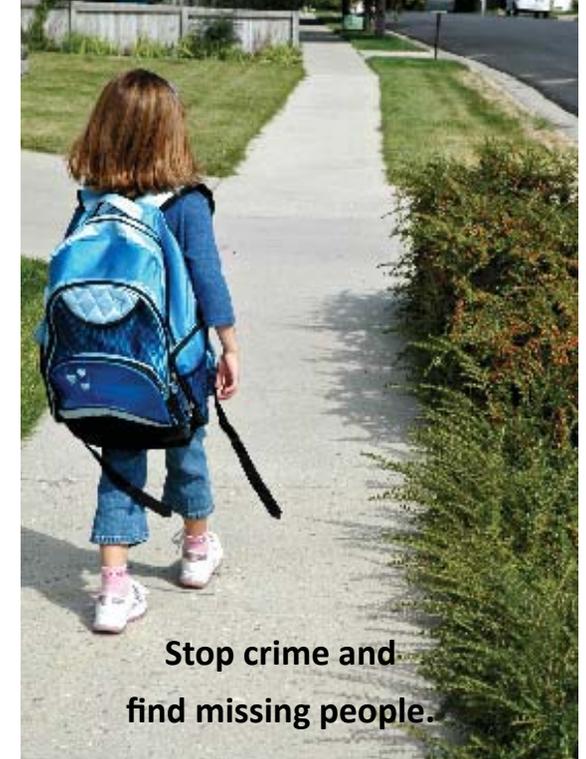
250-491-4560
www.omreb.com

1,100 **REALTORS'** assisting RCMP
in their Central and North Okanagan,
and Shuswap communities...

Joining the 14,000 participating
REALTORS' in the Lower Mainland.



REALTORS' Help Police.



**Stop crime and
find missing people.**



*A crime prevention and emergency
assistance partnership between
REALTORS' and police agencies
across many communities
in British Columbia*

REALTY WATCH WORKS!

Some BC Success Stories

In 2009, a White Rock REALTOR® located a missing, vulnerable senior within one hour of the fan-out sent asking for assistance. The woman was returned safely to her care home.

In 2008, an alert REALTOR® responded to a request by police asking that REALTORS® be on the lookout for an individual enquiring about high-end property in West Vancouver. This resulted in the arrest of two alleged con artists.

In 2006, a REALTOR® was instrumental in helping RCMP locate a missing teenager - aiding in her swift discovery and safe return. The REALTOR® shared her fan-out text message with a friend who, unbeknownst to her, knew the missing girl. As they were reading the message together, the girl phoned and was reunited with her loved ones that afternoon.

In 2000, a REALTOR® spotted a missing boy during an open house. He was later reunited with his relieved family, safe and sound.

WHAT IS REALTY WATCH?

Realty Watch is an 'eyes and ears' crime prevention and emergency assistance network of more than 15,000 REALTORS® from the Okanagan, Fraser Valley, Chilliwack and Greater Vancouver.

Volunteer REALTORS® provide assistance to local Police and RCMP in time-critical situations such as abductions, lost or missing children or seniors, and missing persons who suffer from physical or mental disabilities that put them at risk if not found soon.

REALTORS® can also provide assistance to Police by looking for a vehicle or a person that may pose a serious threat to the public.

Equipped with pagers and cell phones, and always on the move from one neighbourhood to the next, REALTORS® are well suited to keeping an eye open for people or suspicious activities.

The public can support community-based programs like **Realty Watch** by actively participating in crime prevention:

- Get to know your neighbours.
- Keep an eye out for suspicious people.
- Report any unusual activity in progress to your local police detachment.

HOW DOES REALTY WATCH WORK?

Only the **RCMP** can initiate a Realty Watch fan-out — a simultaneous text messaging of REALTORS® across the Central and North Okanagan, and Shuswap.

When Police want to send a text message to REALTORS®, they contact a designated Realty Watch email address at the participating Board — typically asking REALTORS® to be on the lookout for a lost or missing person, or for a vehicle or person that could pose a threat to the public.

The Board's Realty Watch coordinator condenses the information into a short text message that is sent to all REALTORS® who will receive an Alert on their cell phones or PDAs within 15 minutes.

Any Central Okanagan REALTOR® who receives the text message, and who sees or hears anything that could help RCMP with that case, is asked to call **250-762-3300** (or 911 - depending on alert instructions) and report the information.

KELOWNA RCMP

250-762-3300

Parents should know that...

REALTORS® help find missing children



If your child goes missing, make sure you ask the responding police officer, "Did you request a Realty Watch fan-out?"

Realty Watch is one of the largest volunteer crime prevention networks in the Lower Mainland and the Okanagan with more than 15,000 REALTORS® to help police look for lost, missing or abducted children or adults.

With the assistance of your local real estate board (OMREB), police can send a text message and 1,100 REALTORS® in the Central and North Okanagan, and Shuswap will receive the alert on their cell phones or PDAs.

Realty Watch works!

For more information about Realty Watch, ask your REALTOR®, OR:

Call OMREB **250-491-4560**

Visit **www.omreb.com**

