



## Working and travelling abroad

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There have always been security threats to be considered when travelling or working abroad. In the past, the type and degree of threat could, to a certain extent, be pre-determined with little or minimal research. However, in recent years, areas of political unrest, terrorist activity and growing sophistication and boldness of criminal groups have meant an increase. Criminal groups now operate in areas previously considered low risk. These activities have resulted in bombings, shootings, kidnaps, hostage taking and violent robbery / mugging, especially against western and/or western-associated personnel and organisations.

If you are a British national, you can use a service called LOCATE, provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - please see attached link [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/Locate/](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/Locate/). The benefit of registering yourself or your employees with the service is that, should a major incident happen in the country you are travelling in, the FCO will have an instant record of your details, so that they can make contact with you to ensure you are ok and to provide advice. If family and friends need to get in contact with you in an emergency, this can help to track you down. You only need to register with the service once and then you can go on and update an account when you travel again. This information will be shared with the British Embassy, who will know you are coming and means you do not have to contact them.

### **Advice for Employers**

1. Don't rely on EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) in the European Economic Area and Switzerland. The EHIC has a number of restrictions and cannot be viewed as a replacement for an international medical policy.
2. Check to see if health insurance is mandatory. When sending staff abroad for more than 6 months, you should provide them with international health insurance. For some countries, particularly the Middle East, it is mandatory.
3. Ensure that an employee is fit to travel. A pre-travel health check can go a long way to ensuring employees remain fit and healthy while they are abroad. It can also highlight any recommended working adjustments and reduce the risk of the travel being cut short due to illness.
4. Ensure that staff take steps to avoid preventable illnesses. Vaccinations and anti-malarial drugs should be arranged. You can contact your local GP who will advise you of any required vaccinations. You can also check up to date information on this link - [www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/ForeignTravel/BeforeYouTravel/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/ForeignTravel/BeforeYouTravel/index.htm)
5. Carry out risk assessments on areas your staff may travel to and any other due diligence necessary. There are a wide variety of free and easy to use resources, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country>) to 'Risk Maps' (e.g. <http://www.world-aware.com> or <http://www.riskmap-controlrisks.com>) and specialist advice published by the leading Risk Management Companies. These companies can also be engaged to produce specific reports, advice and assistance based on real-world and up-to-date knowledge.  
  
But don't overlook the internet media, such as searching the BBC news site for example.
6. Protect your assets against extortion. Kidnapping of company employees is a very real risk and generates millions a year in ransom payments. The UK government policy is not to pay ransoms. Employers should seriously consider specialist advice and Kidnap and Ransom insurance cover when sending staff to volatile regions, particularly areas of Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.
7. Consider preparing 'Emergency Boxes' for each member of staff travelling to areas of risk. These

can contain items which may be of use should something happen – such as hair samples for DNA checking, details of Next of Kin and secure information or passwords for use to verify the identity and welfare of staff during any communication.

8. Plan for the worst case scenario. You should consider anything you can do in advance to allow you to understand and prepare for possible events and to make sure that you are able to respond quickly and effectively should anything happen. You should have a clear plan for setting up a Crisis Management Team (CMT – see other advice on the Badger Software website.) Identify and brief the team on their responsibilities in advance and test that response as far as is practical. Testing will help you find any weaknesses in your team or plan when the risks are low – so that you can be better prepared to respond when the risks might be very high.
9. Corporate Responsibility and Corporate Manslaughter – common sense and compassion for a fellow colleague will drive you to look after your staff and do your best for their welfare, but you should be aware of new laws related to governance which not only insist that you take appropriate steps, but which may require extra measures to document and prove that you have fulfilled your duty of care. These laws may make CEOs and directors personally responsible and do not allow this responsibility to be passed onto managers within the organisation. You should thoroughly understand your responsibilities before you start sending staff overseas, especially if sending them to risky areas of the world.
10. Look after the families – the family of any staff members involved in a critical incident are victims too, and you need to ensure you look after their welfare and that they are aligned with your plans and objectives, where possible. Not to mention that you do not want friends and relatives undermining your efforts by giving sensitive information to the media which may compromise your handling of the incident.
11. Make sure you have a good media strategy – often the obvious strategy may be to keep matters private and not involve the media. However, if the media become aware of the situation or you are

dealing with high profile individuals or you need the assistance of the media, finding the best way to communicate with them is crucial. Putting incorrect or sensitive information in the public domain can compromise your efforts and be used by the wrong people, may lead to unwanted press intrusion which can hamper your activity and can damage a brand or reputation which has been hard won over many years, and can be won or lost in moments during a critical incident.

12. Communication and Co-ordination are the cornerstone of successful crisis management. Without this, information can very quickly become fragmented, people's understanding becomes incomplete, rapid decisions are made with incorrect, incomplete or out of date information and the Crisis Management Team can become a very disjointed and chaotic environment.
13. Paper exchanges, verbal conversations and white-boards all have their place, but also have their problems.
14. CLIO is a software package specifically designed by Badger Software with the purpose of turning your Crisis Management Team from being a group of individuals into a well organised team – sharing information effectively, making informed decisions and keeping track of outstanding tasks. This software has been designed for ease of use in what are usually high pressure environments and it has been tested in the most demanding situations on a regular basis.

CLIO is used for managing critical incidents by over 90% of the UK's police forces and by other government departments and law enforcement in countries across the world. It has been responsible for answering many of the problems related to communication and co-ordination and has made the teams working in this environment calmer, better informed and better able to respond when the need arises.

Many commercial companies and organisations are now seeing the benefits in relation to crises, protecting staff when abroad or under threat, demonstrating their decision making and corporate responsibility and ultimately saving lives and reputations.

## **Advice for Employees**

1. Know the local customs - there are gestures that you may have been accustomed to, but which are frowned upon in other countries. For example, using the American gesture for OK can mean totally different things in Brazil, Japan and Southern France, and could be quite embarrassing. Learn some polite expressions (hello-goodbye-thank you)
2. Avoid looking like a tourist; generally don't wear excessive or expensive jewellery. If you have to bring items of electronic equipment then put them in the oldest backpack you can find.
3. Be aware of your clothing choices. Wearing shorts in public is generally not acceptable in most parts of the world. In Arab Countries, low necklines, sleeveless shirts and short skirts are definitely a bad idea. When in doubt, dress conservatively.
4. Keep cash and credit cards separate from ID cards. This way you eliminate the risk of having them all stolen. If you carry a wallet, place it in the front pockets of your trousers instead of the back.
5. Be alert when using public transport and steer clear of unlicensed taxis. Try to sit near to the driver on the front of the bus. If you are getting on a train, try to find a seat in a busy carriage somewhere in the middle. This means you only have to walk down half a potentially lonely or poorly lit station platform
6. Always be aware of the latest assessment and advice on countries you are travelling to. Situations can change in a very short period of time, so you should not rely on an assessment done several months or even years ago – it may not be correct any more.
7. If you are in a country where political tensions are high, be extremely careful. It has been known for such tensions to erupt suddenly, resulting in terrible consequences. If you find yourself in this situation, do not go outside of where you are staying, alert the British Embassy of your location and stay there. Always ensure that you have a stock of food and water in your hotel. You may think that you are wasting money on items you will not use, but they could save your life in a worst case scenario. You could always give them to the hotel as a thank you when you leave!
8. If you are travelling in a country that has a history of foreign citizen kidnaps and you suspect you could be a potential victim, do not leave your hotel/accommodation at the same time every day. Do not use the same route to go to or from a specific destination every time. You should consider notifying your company of your movements on a regular basis, and keeping this information secure.



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