

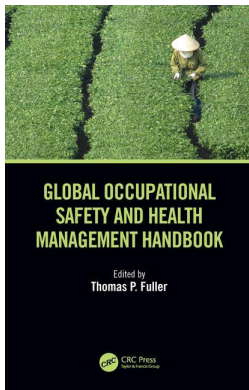
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Thomas P. Fuller

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18 Travel Safety and Security for the Global Worker

Thomas P. Fuller
Illinois State University

CONTENTS

18.1	Introduction	310
18.2	International Work Hazards	310
18.2.1	Violence/Kidnapping	310
18.2.2	Transportation Hazards	311
18.2.3	Political Instability	311
18.2.4	Infectious Diseases	312
18.2.5	Natural Disasters	312
18.3	Legal Perspectives	313
18.4	Business Perspectives	314
18.5	Identifying and Assessing Risks	315
18.6	Before Workers Travel	318
18.7	Security Measures	320
18.8	Travel Insurance	321
18.9	Contracted Services	322
18.10	Program Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	322
18.11	Living Abroad	323
18.11.1	Food and Drink	323
18.11.2	Communicable Diseases	323
18.11.3	Hotel Safety	323
18.11.4	Driving Safety	324
18.11.5	Communications	325
18.11.6	Using Taxis	325
18.11.7	Environmental Conditions	325
18.12	Special Concerns for Female Travelers	325
18.13	Psychosocial Adaptation	326
18.14	Emergency Preparedness	326
18.15	Conclusions/Recommendations	326
Appendix: Sample Organizational Policies, Programs, and Procedures for International Workers		327
Policies		327
Programs		327
Procedures		328
References		329

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The increased globalization of business, industry, and agriculture requires an ever-increasing number of world workers and employees to travel internationally. The number of workers traveling abroad is expected to increase by 50% by 2020 (PWC, 2010). These workers on extended duty beyond the borders of their homelands are subject to many risks unlike and greater than most that they see in their daily lives in their home countries. The average total cost of a 1-year international assignment is US\$311,000. The average cost of a failed international assignment in terms of productivity, reputation, medical evacuation, and other costs is up to US\$950,000 (SOS/IOSH, 2016). These workers represent a valuable asset to the organization sending them abroad, but it is argued that employers also have a duty to care for these workers' security, health, and safety beyond the actual workplaces in these foreign countries while they are on assignments. This chapter describes many of the risks that traveling workers may be subjected to, and the responsibilities that employers have to protect them while working abroad. It also provides sources of accurate information regarding travel risks. It identifies programs and procedures to minimize and control risks, in addition to responding to emergencies.

Whether it is for a short visit to a foreign manufacturing site, or a 2-year overseas assignment, employers have an ethical responsibility to ensure the safety of travelers and ex-patriots while they are abroad. Not only should the home country occupational exposure limits and job safety working conditions be met, but traveling abroad brings a whole new set of security and safety concerns that may not be part of the normal occupational safety and health rubric at home. Workers abroad may be subjected to potentially violent social settings and workplaces. They may encounter a variety of infectious agents, or wild and venomous animals or poisonous insects. Differences in languages, food safety customs, availability of safe drinking water, and standards of medical care each warrant a thorough review for every employee traveling to any country internationally.

18.2 INTERNATIONAL WORK HAZARDS

18.2.1 VIOLENCE/KIDNAPPING

Being the victim of crime or violence when traveling abroad for work is not unusual in many regions of the world. International travelers may appear racially different, they may dress differently, they may not know the language, and they behave differently from local populations. They are not aware of local conditions and appropriate security measures; it is easy to become a target of petty or serious crimes.

There are more than 100,000 kidnapping cases annually, but only 10% are reported to local authorities for fear of revenge and repercussions of talking to the police (Smith, 2010). Kidnapping hot spots include Mexico, Brazil, India, Venezuela, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Columbia, Iraq, Ecuador, Somalia, and the Philippines.

But they also happen in economically developed and western/European countries. International workers and jobsites are common kidnapping targets due to their known and seen wealth. Workers or family members may be taken off the street, in hotels, and at jobsites.

18.2.2 TRANSPORTATION HAZARDS

If transportation is a significant workplace hazard in the developed countries, then transportation is especially hazardous in economically underdeveloped ones. In addition, the employer should consider travel to and from work, as part of the job assignment for the international worker. According to the Aid Worker Security Database, 48.8% of violent attacks on workers occur in transit on roads (AWSDB, 2016).

Approximately 1.25 million people die each year in road traffic accidents. And 90% of road fatalities happen in low- and middle-income countries even though these countries have only half the vehicles in the world. Nearly 50 million people suffer nonfatal injuries and disability. In less developed countries, road accidents equal up to 5% of their gross national product (WHO, 2016).

Since a significant portion of road fatalities occur to workers, employers should be mindful of the impact these accidents have on their organizations. And although companies can control such factors as worker driving and vehicle maintenance to reduce their direct risks, many risk factors that impact their worker's safety depend on social factors of the host country. Factors including road conditions, and laws that affect other drivers' behaviors such as speed limits, drinking and driving, and distracted driving, can play a large role in determining the level of risk of road travel for workers on assignments internationally. Organizations with workers abroad have an interest to become politically active on these issues as a means to improve their own worker's safety.

In addition, in low-income countries, half of the road deaths are of pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. Although being injured or killed while commuting to and from work is not typically considered a workplace occurrence, it would still behoove employers to consider the risks to their workforce and take action to reduce the likelihood of losing this valuable commodity of human resource. Employees might be encouraged to take public transportation, or special training might be provided to help workers understand the risks and possible precautions that could be taken on a personal level.

18.2.3 POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Many countries are under some forms of political instability or strife, or even civil war. Gunfire and artillery are common occurrences in many countries. Several sources of information regarding the political conditions and safety for international travel are available:

U.S. Department of State—Travel (www.state.gov/travel/)

European Commission—Consular Protection (https://ec.europa.eu/consular-protection/content/home_en)

UK Government—Foreign Travel Advice (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)
Australian Government—Smart Traveller (<http://smartraveller.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>)

18.2.4 INFECTIOUS DISEASES

A wide variety of infectious diseases that have been eradicated in the western world are still endemic in large regions of the world. Malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis, and yellow fever still are endemic in Africa, India, and large parts of China. Much of the world still has polio and small pox. Huge parts of Africa are still being ravaged by human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

Workers traveling to and through various countries need to consider all the pathways of exposure that they may encounter during their travels. Travel notices are provided at a variety of sources including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization (WHO). It cannot be assumed that the family physician will be aware of the appropriate travel vaccines and endemic diseases in foreign countries. It is best to verify the recommendations with a variety of sources and reference points well before travel begins.

CASE

An engineering firm sent a worker to tend to a project for one week on an oil-drilling platform well off the coast of Gabon in western Africa. After checking with the CDC travel information, the company did not recommend or provide malaria medicine for the worker since he would be working far out at sea and there would not be mosquitos there. A few days after returning home from his trip, the worker began getting headaches and diarrhea. After a couple days, he saw his doctor and they ran some tests. The worker had contracted malaria and after a few days had an extreme case of liver failure and died. Upon investigation of the case, it was found that the day the worker arrived in Gabon, the helicopter service to the oil platform was not working and he spent the night in a hotel on land. It was concluded that he was bitten by a mosquito at this time, and contracted the disease. In a lawsuit brought by the employees' family, the company was found to be responsible for the workers' death by not providing appropriate protection for the worker.

Foodborne infectious diseases can also be problematic for many workers traveling abroad in many parts of the world. Combined with long airline travel, lack of sleep, poor diet, and dehydration, infectious organisms in the food can be catastrophic. Elderly workers, and employees with other medical conditions, can be especially vulnerable to foodborne illnesses.

18.2.5 NATURAL DISASTERS

Natural phenomenon such as earthquakes, volcanoes, typhoons, hurricanes, and others may occur any time and disrupt travel and the well-being of international workers. Some regions of the world may be more prone to various natural disasters. Some natural disasters may be more likely to occur in certain seasons or regions. Others may provide no warnings whatsoever.

Some countries may not only be prone to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, but the infrastructure may not be designed to support the occurrences. Not only are parts of Mexico more prone to large-scale earthquakes, many of the buildings are not built to withstand them and often tumble to the ground, where more modern buildings built to higher safety specifications would not be affected.

Some regions of countries may be more susceptible to natural disasters. Low-lying regions may be more susceptible to flash flooding or storm surges. Coastal regions are more likely to suffer greater wind damage from hurricanes and large storms.

18.3 LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

The International Labor Organization (ILO) Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health (2006) is a collective agreement between countries to develop acceptable programs and regulations to prevent occupational accidents, illnesses, and diseases. This framework requires signatory countries to develop national policies, systems, programs, and cultures that ensure safe and healthy work environments for all workers. Legal debate and discussion about the scope of the framework has led to interpretations that include employees working in foreign destinations (Mathiason, 2013). That is, workers traveling to another country on assignment also have the right to have safe and healthy working conditions.

The ILO 1981 Occupational Safety and Health Convention's Preventative Approach to Occupational Safety and Health and the Duty of Care also described the responsibilities for governments to ensure a broad interpretation of the legal concept "duty of care" to require employers to provide occupational health and safety to all workers. The convention applies the scope to all branches of economic activity in which workers are employed, including public service. And Article 3 of the convention defines "workplaces" as "all places where workers need to be or to go by reason of their work and which are under the direct or indirect control of the employer" (ILO, 1981).

Article 2 of the 2006 ILO framework requires continuous improvement of programs for worker health and safety to reflect relevant ILO guidelines and industry standards as they are created. This can be interpreted to include the assessment of new risks as they emerge, and development of ways to control those risks. This now includes protections for risks to business travelers, international assignees, and all employees of the company working abroad (Mathiason, 2013). This has expanded to include such foreseeable location-specific risks to international workers such as kidnapping because the hazard is incurred during the line of duty (Claus, 2009).

Risks to these international employees are considered unique but not exceptional and therefore need to be identified by the employer and any actions available to control risks need to be set in motion by the employer (Berkowitz, 2011). If a risk is foreseeable, then the employer must take action to control and minimize it. These controls could include ensuring workers have appropriate vaccines before travel, security measures are in place, and workers have received appropriate safety and security training (ILO, 2006). Overall, business traveler risk assessment and mitigation programs are now considered the standard of care for corporate health and safety program managers (Claus, 2009, 2010).

Case law in the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia has already begun to reflect the industry standards in international travel responsibilities for employers (Berkowitz, 2011). Employers have already been held responsible for employees who have been injured in accidents, victims of crime, kidnapping, and gotten sick with infectious diseases while working abroad. The UK Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act of 2007 specifically imposes criminal liability on employers for gross breaches of the duty of care for the death of employees working abroad (UK, 2007).

The UK duty of care requires employers to provide for the safety of workers when there is a foreseeable risk and a causal link between the work required and an injury. When working abroad, this duty of care extends beyond the worksite to include all aspects of life while on assignment including travel and safety at their accommodations. Additionally, the European Directive 89/391 also outlines responsibilities for employers to provide and promote occupational safety and health for employees traveling abroad throughout the EU (EU, 1989).

In the United Kingdom, the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974 requires employers to provide a duty of care to all workers. In addition, the UK Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act of 2007 can impose criminal liability on organizations where there is a gross breach of duty that results in the death of an employee. Both of these laws can be applied to workers extraterritorially even when the negligent decisions causing the death were made by managers remaining in the United Kingdom. The EU and Australia each have similar laws that place responsibility on employers to provide for worker safety while on international assignments (Berkowitz, 2011).

In an in-depth analysis of laws associated with dangerous international employee assignments, Berkowitz (2011) showed that the determination of the extent of legal responsibility for employers to provide for all aspects of worker safety while they are abroad is a complex issue. The laws involved in each international case depend on the laws in the host country and specific details about each case, including whether the worker was “at work,” whether the injured worker is covered by workers’ compensation, and whether they can sue their employers.

18.4 BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

Separate from the legal concerns and implications for provision of safety for international workers, there are fundamental business reasons for having global worker security programs. By promoting worker travel safety, organizations will

- Reduce the disruptions to business due to unnecessary incidents.
- Improve worker moral and peace of mind while on international assignments.
- Increase return on investments.
- Improve public relations and reduce the likelihood of media attention.
- Reduce the number of premature worker returns from assignments.
- Reduce the costs associated with repatriation and medical responses.
- Lessen legal liabilities associated with international travel (SOS Gold, 2013).

18.5 IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING RISKS

Before sending employees to international assignments, the employer has a responsibility to thoroughly assess all the various risks the worker will be exposed to during their travels. It may not be possible to eliminate all the risks that an employee may encounter abroad, but legal liabilities can be reduced by providing adequate warning of the risks that the workers may encounter. A comprehensive risk assessment should follow predetermined protocols and be documented for future reference and revision, when necessary.

Basic risk assessment for international travel should include at a minimum the following:

- Individual and detailed aspects of the travel to and work within the host country
- Identification of specific health, safety, and security risks for each activity
- Determining which individuals are at risk
- Evaluating what risk control measures are available and most practicable
- Measuring residual risks that remain after controls are in place
- Reviewing and updating the risk assessment periodically to reflect environmental, social, political, and economic changes

As risk is greatly dependent on the country or region the worker will be traveling to, this is a good place to begin the risk assessment. Political institutions and local laws should identify any potential problems for individuals working abroad. The online database of the State Department of the United States is an excellent resource to identify the political systems and stability of hundreds of countries and is updated frequently (USSD, 2018). The State Department lists travel advisories for numerous countries that identify particular hazards, crime reports, and even areas to avoid. Requirements for passports or visas for each country are also provided. In addition, general guidance for traveling abroad is provided on the United States State Department website.

The ILO also provides information for workers going abroad on assignments. Much of the information is country specific regarding working conditions, national regulations, and ratification of ILO treaties and conventions (ILO, 2018). Travel advisories and notices for several countries are provided at the ILO website.

In addition to political stability, the economic stability of the country should be assessed. Methods for employee payment and financing of their work and living expenses abroad need to be identified prior to assignment. Trustworthy financial institutions must be identified before travel, and the legal means of payment and movement of money must be understood in order to avoid any possible illegal activities. Tax liabilities need to be evaluated to ensure an employee working abroad complies with all tax and financial obligations during their stay abroad.

Workers need to be trained on how and where to attain cash, and how to secure the cash that they have on hand. Cash can be obtained at hotel automatic teller machines (ATMs) and at currency exchanges on the secure side of airport clearance systems. ATMs on the street should never be used in many cities and regions.

Social systems and cultural norms must be analyzed and assessed. Religious and cultural differences can present a form of “risk” if the traveling employee is unfamiliar with social norms and practices. Consumption of alcohol may be illegal. Certain prescription drugs such as pain relievers, medical marijuana, other medicines, and even poppy seeds may be illegal. These need to be identified before travel to preclude complications from arising at immigration checkpoints. Certain clothing or attire may be inappropriate or even illegal. Other clothing may be required, such as head of face coverings for women in public.

Security systems within the region of assignment should be analyzed. Private armed services may be needed in addition to local law enforcement. In fact, the validity and conduct of local law enforcement may also warrant explicit evaluation by professional consultants prior to assignment. Weaknesses and inefficiencies, and even corruption of law enforcement in the area, may preclude placing workers in the area, or at least warrant increasing private security systems to offset the concerns.

Medical incidents that occur during worker travel can be very disruptive to business activities and the lives of workers. Thousands of international trips are canceled, delayed, and negatively affected by injury and illness during the trips (Druckman, 2014). Many of the illnesses in workers are caused by communicable and infectious diseases. Workers who become dehydrated and tired from travel become susceptible to these diseases. Illnesses are often exacerbated and prolonged due to limited and inadequate health-care facilities and lack of appropriate medicines (Allegranzi, 2011).

Medical risks may include the lack of access to acceptable emergency or routine health-care services. The WHO provides a comprehensive list of endemic diseases throughout the world. The WHO lists various countries and now has a crisis-rating system that grades the various outbreaks of infectious diseases in different countries. In this system, Grade 3 countries indicated events with substantial public health consequences that require substantial WHO response. Grade 2 conditions or events represent outbreaks that represent moderate public health consequences and require moderated WHO response. Grade 1 conditions are events that represent minimal public health consequences and require minimal WHO response (WHO, 2018).

Routine and emergency medical care sources and hospitals should be identified before travel. Services should include the availability of psychiatric treatment and support if the need arises. Emergency medical travel capabilities should be identified. The means to pay for both local emergency medical services and emergency medical travel should be arranged prior to appointment and arrival.

The medical conditions of employees and their families traveling with them should be evaluated prior to assignment. Workers with known preexisting medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, pacemakers/defibrillators) should be considered especially. Special medical treatments and routine examinations or treatments should be considered. Sources for examinations and treatment should be identified and arranged prior to travel, if possible. Employees with special medical conditions may not be appropriate for assignments that would put them or their families at excessive risk due to inadequate medical facilities or capabilities in the assigned country.

In a study of 48 large U.S. multinational companies with employees traveling abroad, it was observed that contrary to common perceptions, most serious medical problems that require aggregate services occur in what are considered to be

“low-risk” countries that are economically developed rather than “high-risk” economically developing countries (Druckman, 2014). This study also showed that business travelers in what would be considered “safe” working environments such as finance or business services actually used a greater proportion of medical services than more hazardous industries such as mining or construction. This is partially explained by larger numbers of workers from those sectors and the injuries being related to the employees themselves. In addition, many of the injuries and illnesses in “low-risk” countries occur when employees are on personal time, or traveling within the host country to local tourist attractions, and partaking in non-work-related activities. This same study showed, however, that the “high-risk” countries did show a clear “gradient of risk when viewed from the perspective of the individual trip” (Druckman, 2014). On an individual trip basis, a trip to a “high-risk” country is much more likely to require hospitalization than travel to a “low-risk” host country.

The need for vaccinations and ongoing prophylactic treatments, such as malaria medications, should be evaluated for employees prior to travel. Malaria medications, for example, must begin prior to travel, and continue for a period after travel, in order to be fully effective. Some countries require proof of vaccination prior to admission. This may be particularly true when returning from countries with ongoing outbreaks of highly contagious diseases, such as yellow fever.

Additional information on vaccines and vaccination programs can be found at the following websites:

www.who.int/immunization/en/—World Health Organization Immunization, Vaccines, and Biologicals

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html—United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/home>—European Center for Disease Prevention and Control

www.dh.gov.uk—United Kingdom Department of Health and Social Care

Transportation risks include a broad variety of modes of travel. Airline travel today is fairly standardized and includes control of terrorism activities on the planes themselves. Airline travel security, including aircraft maintenance, is fairly well regulated and controlled by international standards of conformance.

Once inside a nation, however, transportation safety and security can vary widely. Generally, train and bus travel will be safer and more secure than traveling in individual vehicles. Personal vehicles are significantly more susceptible to damage and injury from collision and road accidents. Vehicular accident rates due to different traffic and road conditions vary greatly between countries, and traveling to work by car can present significant hazards to workers and should be considered and minimized when possible.

In addition to the hazards of vehicular accidents, workers traveling in a vehicle by themselves may become a victim of kidnapping, crime, or terrorism. Armored vehicles and traveling with security staff may reduce the overall risks but may also draw additional attention to the worker.

Special worker risks are characteristics that might put workers at particular risk in a given nation or region. Women may be especially vulnerable in certain cultures,

and special precautions may be warranted. They may be likely subjects of violence or segregation from certain areas or facilities. In many parts of the world, women need to adhere to strict social norms, and if they do not, they are subject to criminal charges.

Lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender employees may be at particular risk in a number of countries. In several countries, sexual relations with members of the same sex are subject to fines, imprisonment, or death. It is important that workers, and particularly family members, understand the laws and ramifications of violations.

Religious proselytization is also considered a crime in many countries. Symbols of certain religions are illegal in many countries, and laws should be followed to the greatest extent possible. In France, it is illegal to wear face coverings or hijabs and other conspicuously religious symbols in public. In many Muslim-oriented countries, wearing a crucifix or cross could be construed as proselytizing and subject to criminal charges. Wearing religious symbols of a counter religion is not a sensitive or wise activity in any culture and easily leads to resentment and hostility, and should be avoided whenever possible for both legal and security reasons.

18.6 BEFORE WORKERS TRAVEL

Organizations with workers traveling abroad should have clearly developed policies and procedures to guide travel activities and responses to unusual conditions or situations. Safety practices, policies, and limits should follow a combination of regulations and standards of both the home and host countries, with a slant towards the requirements that are most stringent and conservative. Organizational policies should be sure to include the individual responsibilities of employees too. Sample organizational travel policies and programs are provided in the Appendix.

Traveling abroad should begin with an analysis of the host country including political and social stability, visa requirements, embassy locations, health conditions, and cultural norms. Special support organizations are typically available both within host countries and from sources abroad before travel. An employee selection process should be used to identify existing employees who may be willing to travel abroad. This process would also identify language capabilities, experience traveling abroad, understanding of and sensitivity to other cultures, and possible limitations to traveling internationally.

Factors to consider before sending workers to a foreign country include currency stability and possible expenses, religious and cultural differences, employment laws, and the availability of reliable communications systems. Driving laws and access to medical care should also be determined before travel begins. The political and social conditions of the country should be considered too, including terrorist activity, civil unrest, and lack of infrastructure, such as grocery stores (Berkowitz, 2011).

Useful sources of information regarding traveling abroad include the following:

- ILO Country Profiles on Occupational Safety and Health (www.ilo.org/safework/countries/lang--en/index.htm)
- ILO Global Database on Occupational Safety and Health Legislation (LEGOSH) (www.ilo.org/dyn/legosh/en/f?p=14100:1:0::NO::)

- CIA, Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book—The Fact book provides information on the history, people, government, economy, energy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues for 267 world entities. (www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/)
- WHO (www.who.int/en/ and www.who.int/ihr/IVC200_06_26.pdf)
- UK Department of Health (www.dh.gov.uk)
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/travel)
- European Centre for Disease Control (www.ecdc.europa.eu)
- U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs—Country Information (<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>)

Prior to travel abroad, the means by which employees will communicate should be determined and verified. Special cellular telephone adaptations might be necessary through the service provider. If they are not available, it may be necessary to make arrangements to purchase service once the new country is entered. Means to charge existing or new phones should be available or adaptable to the country's power sources. E-mail should be available at the new country, and power adapters for portable computers may be necessary. Charging systems and adapters should also be available while en route to and from the host country. Backup communications systems should be considered and identified prior to travel.

Employees traveling abroad should be in good physical condition and have routine medical checkups throughout the travel period. Physical and electronic copies of medical and dental records, blood groups, vaccines, and prescriptions should be available. Medical and dental insurance providers should be contacted prior to travel to determine existing coverage and whether additional insurance or premiums are required. Workers should be sure to take an adequate amount of prescription and nonprescription medicines to last for the duration of travel. The legality of prescription, and even over-the-counter medications, should be verified prior to travel.

Medical services available to the worker in the host country should be evaluated and verified prior to travel. Some countries need to have proof of medical insurance coverage for certain minimum monetary values prior to issuing a visa.

Special potential medical problems at host sites such as extreme temperatures or altitudes should be considered for travelers. There may be some period of acclimatization associated with the assignment that should be accommodated in the planning of the itinerary. Older workers or those with special medical conditions may need more time, or special support in adjusting to the new environment. Medical kits may be warranted depending on the locations to be visited. These could include regular first-aid materials, water purification tablets and filters, sunscreen, diarrhea treatment, insect repellent, mosquito nets, and antihistamines. In extremely impoverished locations with minimal access to health care, sterile medical supplies such as syringes, dressings, and sutures may be useful (IOSH, 2015).

In areas where hospital standards are extremely low, additional medical equipment and supplies such as blood plasma and single-use thermometers may be warranted (IOSH, 2015). Workers or family members with any special nutritional needs

should consider where they will acquire the food. Special allergies to foods or other materials should be evaluated prior to travel.

Financial services and measures should be in place before traveling abroad. Adequate amounts of cash should be on hand, and the means to send payments to employees should be known and verified before travel, if possible. Credit card companies and banks should be contacted to ensure that the credit and debit cards will work properly internationally. Copies of all card numbers, access codes, and passwords should be kept in a separate document when traveling. Access to credit card and bank account information through the Internet cloud should be considered for continued access from remote locations. The data stored as a PDF and sent via e-mail is a good backup measure to ensure access to the bank and card information from anywhere.

If possible, it is a good idea to open a local bank account in the host country. An account in a local bank is a good way to ensure access to money when it might be needed. Local laws should be investigated to ensure there are no violations, but local bank managers should also be familiar with requirements. A local credit/debit card from a national bank could also be useful for long-term assignments.

Employees should learn as much as they can about their host country before traveling by reading travel journals, looking at websites, asking people who have been there, and in some cases by professional consultants who can teach them specifics about host country culture and customs.

Workers should be familiar with the seasons of the host country and bring appropriate clothing. If necessary, they may need to obtain special clothing or equipment before they travel. Whenever possible, dress should be casual and not draw attention. Expensive jewelry and watches should be minimized and kept out of sight.

The appropriate luggage to be used may also vary by host country and the route of travel. Be sure to use suitcase locks so it is easy to see whether someone has tampered with your luggage. Keep a tag with your name and address attached inside the luggage as a backup to the outer tag. And keep a list of all the items inside the suitcase. Avoid using soft-sided luggage since it can be easily compromised. Be sure to keep a reasonable supply of necessary daily prescription medications in your hand luggage in case your luggage is lost or delayed.

18.7 SECURITY MEASURES

Each country presents a different type of personal security threat to business travelers. Employers need to be made aware of potential threats and how to deal with or avoid them. Employees with little or no experience traveling abroad are at particular risk. Even the most-simple aspects of packing and preparation can affect the likelihood of being victim. Certain materials and important medications should not be left in luggage and should be in carry-on bags along with applicable copies of prescriptions.

Strict guidelines for itineraries and timelines should be adhered to, and specific check-in times should be predetermined. Accommodations should be selected carefully and in safe areas with easy access to public transportation and hotel shuttles and taxis. Fares to destinations should be agreed upon before entering vehicles,

whenever possible. Even the route to the destination can be determined before you get in the car.

CASE

In Mexico City, there are taxis that are vetted by western hotels that are accepted as respectable and “safe” through a system of registration or recognition by such characteristics as age and company emblems. Other less reputable taxis frequent the streets and are taken by locals at a much lower fare, and slightly higher risk. Taxis have been known to target foreigners and then take them for ransom. This can be especially true if the fee for service to the destination is not agreed upon before entering the vehicle. Many of the “non-approved” taxi drivers do not speak English. You need to know what the taxi etiquette is in whatever country you are travelling in, and if you plan on taking the taxi from the airport to your hotel when you get there, you not only need the right money, but which taxis to take and what to say. What is taxi etiquette in Johannesburg, South Africa?

If workers are driving a car in the foreign country, then the rules of the road should be learned prior to travel. Carjackings are common in some countries. In some countries, drivers are known to cause intentional “accidents” in order to try to solicit bribes or other forms of payment.

It goes without saying that foreign visitors should keep their defenses up at all times. When approached on the street by people wanting money or directions, travelers should keep their distance and discourage interaction even though it appears the person is in need, lost, needs money for a bus ticket, or found what appears to be a valuable ring or wallet. Travelers should always keep at least arms-length away from people on the street, if possible. Opulent visible jewelry should not be worn, even if costume, as it attracts the eye of would-be thieves. Valuable jewelry is sometimes best left at home altogether for the duration of the travel overseas.

Whether a natural disaster, social or political unrest, disease outbreaks, or economic instability, there should always be a contingency plan for each event. The plan and the strategy may be different for each type of event and for each country. It may be useful and safer to have an adequate amount of cash on hand in the event that electronic banking goes down. Exit strategies and timeframes should be determined prior to travel in the event that management cannot communicate with their employees. Emergency meeting locations for multiple staff in a country should be determined ahead of time. Emergency responses and exit strategies should be practiced periodically.

Travelers should avoid carrying large sums of money, but enough cash for emergencies should be kept on hand. Money should be kept in more than one place to prevent losing it all at once. Travelers’ checks should be kept in addition to various international currency. Whenever possible, store cash and other valuables in available safes.

Keep important phone numbers in more than one location. Numbers should include emergency contacts and the numbers of the nearest embassy or consulate.

18.8 TRAVEL INSURANCE

Actions need to be taken that ensure travelers have adequate medical, dental, and emergency response insurance before traveling. Many corporate or state government

worker medical insurance policies do not cover extended travel outside the home country. Most policies only cover emergency services or emergency repatriation in some instances. Some policies require prior notification before international travel in order to be validated.

When medical insurance policies do not provide reasonable coverage for workers and their families traveling abroad, they need to be upgraded or supplemented with additional policies. In some instances for extended visits, certain countries will require proof of adequate medical insurance prior to administering a visa or travel permit in the country. Employees need to know how to access the medical insurance, and which facilities or health-care systems in the country should be used with the carrier policies. Dental and ophthalmic insurance coverage should also be verified and supplemented, if needed, for the employees and traveling family members.

Insurance for other emergencies is highly recommended, depending on the region or country visited. Insurance for security incidents can include responding to kidnapping and ransom situations. Security incidents may also include blackmail and extortion, and other legal responses to criminal situations. Separate from ransom payments themselves, professional security and legal consultant advice and response can cost several tens of thousands of dollars. The advice of security and legal professionals can go a long way when dealing with criminals and complex legal and political situations in a foreign country. Workers charged with crimes, actual or fabricated by local law enforcement, need competent professional legal representation that can be extremely costly.

18.9 CONTRACTED SERVICES

Organizations working with external consulting services and contracted agencies should have clear arrangements for delineation of responsibilities. Contractor and consultant competencies should be vetted thoroughly by independent sources. Lines of normal and emergency communications should be set up and tested. Insurance and funding sources must be clearly identified and put in place before travel begins.

18.10 PROGRAM EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The travel safety and security program should be reviewed and evaluated periodically. Deficiencies and weaknesses should be documented, reported, and corrected as soon as possible. A problem identified in one country or worker arrangement may be likely to exist in another worker's assignment. Problems identified should not be hidden, but reported to other workers, as a way to improve safety and security. Open communications in the area of program evaluation is the best means to ensure worker safety is continuously moving forward. All levels of management must be made aware of the status of travel security at all times. A list of all workers on assignment should be readily available to management and all departments with responsibilities for worker travel safety and security.

18.11 LIVING ABROAD

18.11.1 FOOD AND DRINK

Many infectious diseases are transmitted via food and drink, so precautions should be taken continuously during the time in the host country. Between 30% and 70% of travelers have traveler's diarrhea, and the majority are believed to be caused by bacterial pathogens in food or drink (Connor, 2018). To be safe, only cooked food that is served hot should be eaten. Raw fruits, salad, and vegetables should be avoided. Water should be boiled before drinking or brushing teeth. If boiling is infeasible, disinfectant tablets or bottled water should be used. The use of ice should be avoided unless made from boiled, chlorinated, or treated water.

Travelers with food allergies should practice extreme caution. Many countries do not require food labeling, or if there is labeling, it may be in a foreign language, incomplete, or incorrect. Antidote medication for allergic reactions may be unavailable, so travelers should carry their own, whenever possible.

18.11.2 COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

If all medical preparations were completed properly prior to travel, then issues with communicable diseases while in the host country should be reduced. Ongoing vigilance is important, however, as conditions may change over time and in different regions. Outbreaks that occur in nearby countries or areas may overflow into the host country with little warning or notice. Additional vaccines, social distancing, or other precautions may be warranted.

18.11.3 HOTEL SAFETY

Prior to selecting a hotel, learn as much as possible about it and the surrounding area. Find out local transportation availability and what other institutions are in the surrounding area. Inquire whether they have a written hotel safety program and onsite security. Is the hotel compound gated to vehicles and pedestrians and secured by armed guards? Do visitors go past a checkpoint to get to the elevators, or are they operated by key card?

If possible, avoid staying in hotel ground floor rooms to reduce public access and improve security. For fire safety, rooms on the second to fourth floors are preferable to higher floors.

When you arrive in your room, check for other access points (balconies, patios, adjoining rooms) and ensure they are secure. Test the room telephone to be sure it is functional. Never answer the room telephone unless you have made prior arrangements to accept a call at a certain time. If the phone rings and you are not expecting a call, wait until after the phone stops ringing and call the operator to see who called, and if someone in the hotel was looking for you. Using the phone to check on your whereabouts is a key way that criminals can track your activities. Recently, hotel telephones have been increasingly used for extortion scams, kidnapping, and other criminal activities.

If someone knocks on your hotel door, use the spyhole. Never open the door to anyone you do not know. If someone is at your door that you are not expecting and do not know, call the hotel reception desk to send someone to inquire who it is. If someone from the hotel arrives unexpected to make repairs in your room, check with the hotel reception before letting them in. While they are in your room, maintain control of all your valuables.

Always keep the deadbolt or chain on your hotel room door when you are there. If the door does not have a chain or deadbolt, ask to change to another room. If second door locks are not available, use a wedge of wood to secure the door from the inside. When you are not in the room, leave the television on low.

Do not linger in the hotel lobby and be cautious about who you talk to there. Do not have loud conversations about your trip, work, room, or personal life with others in the lobby, restaurant, or bar or the hotel.

Locate the nearest fire alarm and extinguishers. Learn the available fire escape routes, and follow them to the final exit points to ensure they are clear.

Avoid keeping large amounts of cash in your room, and use the room safe for small items and small amounts of cash. Keep laptop computers and other cash at the hotel safe.

18.11.4 DRIVING SAFETY

Be sure that your driver's license from your home country will not expire while you are traveling. If it will, get it renewed before you leave on your trip. Always carry your license and insurance information in the vehicle when driving.

Learn about official local driving rules before driving. Learn about driving culture and practices from travel books or local residents. Be aware of local police traffic practices, including frequency and types of roadblocks. Carry cash in order to pay traffic fines you may receive while driving.

Never depend solely on electronic navigation systems for travel, but carry hard copy maps in the vehicle at all times. Be aware of, and avoid, restricted travel areas. Be sure you have a spare tire and know how to change it prior to traveling to remote areas. Carry additional emergency supplies in the vehicle including first-aid kits, fire extinguishers, toolkits, reflective vests, emergency flares, and warning triangles.

Keep your car in good working condition and check tires, fluid levels, and gasoline levels before traveling. For long trips, check on the location of gas stations along the route. Keep vehicle doors locked at all times, even when exiting for short times, such as to refuel. Do not leave valuables in the car.

If you are not familiar with your surroundings, do not get out of the vehicle. If you are involved in an accident and are suspicious of the cause, do not exit the vehicle. If people are pointing out problems with your car or tires, be particularly wary. Drive on to a separate distant public and busy area to stop and inspect the vehicle. Be wary of people wishing to assist you in your auto repair before you have asked them.

If you are ever stopped by local law enforcement and are then asked to report to the local police station, contact your emergency contact numbers to let them know your situation.

Before leaving on a trip, check traffic and road conditions. Avoid peak travel times and avoid traffic congestion when possible. Consider weather, air pollution,

and driving terrain, and make appropriate adjustments in your expected trip duration. In low-economic countries, avoid driving at night, if possible.

18.11.5 COMMUNICATIONS

During the worker's time abroad, systems should allow for 24/7 two-way communications between the organization and the traveler. Mechanisms should be in place to ensure that workers can be informed of changing risk levels either in their host country or surrounding regions or in the home countries. Backup systems should also be identified and tested periodically.

Systems for workers to communicate with family members' traveling/non-traveling should be developed to ensure safety and peace of mind. Protocols should require normal contact times and response activities in the event contact cannot be made.

18.11.6 USING TAXIS

In many countries, taxis represent a significant risk from both traffic accidents and criminal activity. Local conditions should be investigated to determine the safest practices before a taxi is engaged. Hotels will typically know which taxi companies and car services are safe and reputable. In many countries, hailing a taxi in the street is not a safe option. It is always preferable to hire a cab by telephone or from the hotel. Never get into a taxi without verifying that it is the one you hired.

Once in the taxi, confirm your route and the expected fare with the driver. Always sit in the back of the cab and always wear a seat belt. Do not be overly familiar with the driver or share personal information such as where you are from, your profession, employer, or title. If you are uncomfortable with the driver, their driving, or the route being taken, consider having the driver take you to a secure and public location to hire a new taxi for the remainder of the trip.

18.11.7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Extreme weather conditions may not unduly strain workers in top physical shape, but they may stress other workers who may be less physically fit. Extreme weather can put additional stresses on workers of family members and exacerbate preexisting medical conditions sensitive to them. High altitude or high levels of air pollution can put stress on individuals with respiratory illnesses.

18.12 SPECIAL CONCERNS FOR FEMALE TRAVELERS

Depending on the host country, women may be at particular risk. Many countries have gender-specific cultural and legal restrictions. In many countries, it is illegal for a woman to drive, or even ride in a car with a man that is not her husband. In some countries, a woman alone in public is frowned upon and a likely target for crime. Women may be required to wear certain clothing in public. In some host countries,

women's magazines depicting western attire and partial nudity may be considered pornographic and lead to arrest. In some countries, bare skin shown on women is frowned upon and goes against some cultural and religious norms. To minimize unwanted sexual advances and garner greater acceptance by the local residents, it is prudent to dress with discretion and show respect for the culture you are visiting.

18.13 PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTATION

Even the most seasoned traveler can eventually be worn down by extended travel and long duration assignments. Lack of family and social support, foreign cultures and languages, hostile social or political situations, and dangerous security conditions can make life abroad stressful and lead to a variety of psychological problems such as depression. Psychological issues can be even more pronounced and common in family members who relocate with the assigned worker. Spouses and children who accompany the worker may be exposed to different, and possibly worse, conditions of exclusion and social separation. Mental issues should be anticipated and accepted as normal psychological responses to stressful situations. Employers should be proactive in helping workers and their families in their work-life and work-family issues for the psychological well-being of the employee, and success of the travel assignment (Black, 2007). The need for professional support should be recognized as soon as possible, and arrangements should be made to get assistance as soon as possible.

18.14 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency plans and procedures should be developed to cover every possible foreseeable emergency situation. Meeting points and evacuation routes should be planned and practiced ahead of time. Resources to respond to all types of emergencies should be readily available, and/or deployable. Access to security providers and other consultants should be available 24/7, and funds should be available as necessary. Workers and their families need to be trained on all aspects of emergency preparedness and response. Periodic drills and exercises should be used to test emergency preparedness, and corrective actions should be taken when needed.

Workers should carry medical and security travel assistance contact information in case they do not have the capacity to communicate. In countries where the worker is not fluent in the host language, arrangements should be in place for interpreters to respond in all emergencies. Care should be taken to assure that the response to an emergency affecting one worker does not put other workers at the jobsite at risk.

18.15 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Globalization has led to ever-increasing numbers of workers traveling abroad. The responsibility of employers to provide for the safety of their employees extends beyond the borders of their nation of origin. A combination of education and awareness on the risks and hazards in each country, and the basic risks associated with international travel need to lead to programs and systems to ensure the ongoing well-being of workers abroad. The risks are broad and numerous, so individual workers on

assignments cannot be expected to have all the tools and expertise needed to ensure their own security. A comprehensive and elaborate system should be in place before and during employee international travel.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PROCEDURES FOR INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

POLICIES

Policy statements generated at the top levels of management set the foundation for international travel safety. Leadership and commitment to the health and safety of workers traveling abroad provide guidance for the programs and procedures developed to ensure that goals and objectives are met.

Policy statements on intent provide guidance for how travel security should be developed to ensure meeting organizational objectives. Compliance with home and host government regulations should be part of the policy, in addition to a commitment to follow the accepted industry standards of practice. Well-designed policy statements regarding international travel will be sure to align with other corporate policies such as sustainable development and corporate social responsibility.

PROGRAMS

Once organizational policies regarding international travel have been developed, various programs should be created to address the identified goals. The organizational structure to address various travel security objectives should be developed to delineate roles and responsibilities of departments or individuals in the organization. Clear lines of communication and responsibility between different levels of management should be part of written travel safety programs.

One primary organizational department should be identified with the central role and responsibility for the overall travel security program. This person or department should have the experience and resources available to complete the required tasks that are assigned. Various programs that will need to be developed to support a comprehensive and thorough travel safety program will include at a minimum the following:

- Risk assessment
- Traveling worker/family assessment
- Pretravel protocols
- Medical evaluation/preparation
- Training for workers and traveling/non-traveling family members
- Communications
- Accommodations
- Transportation (to and from host country and within the host country)
- Security services
- Educational systems (for family members traveling with worker)
- Financial services/operations

- Insurance
- Legal services
- Emergency response
- Post-travel debriefing
- Auditing/reporting /continuous improvement

PROCEDURES

Once the overarching programs are completed for the international worker travel safety and security goals and organization, detailed procedures can be created to support the individual program objectives. Clear and concise written procedures offer the opportunity for various departments to review other department's procedures and identify conflicts, inconsistencies, or redundancies before they occur in practice. Quality assurance and document control systems can be put in place to ensure consistency over time, and keep track of program changes and improvements as they are made. Procedures that are transparent and readily available to workers and managers help to clarify program objectives and set easy to follow tasks and steps for workers to follow at each step of the travel assignment.

Emergency response procedures should include initial notification, communication, risk assessment, response actions, ongoing event monitoring and analysis, continued support actions, and de-escalation/recovery. These procedures should be written and available onsite as hard copies and electronically as PDFs on computer systems, and also available through the Internet. Workers and managers should receive detailed training on emergency response procedures. Emergency drills and exercises should be held periodically.

Training programs lead to detailed procedures regarding how and when workers will receive training. The training procedures will identify the topics covered in each session and provide documentation of worker attendance.

Travel Security—Pretravel Checklist

Risk assessment
 Political stability
 Social stability
 Economic stability
 Religious requirements
 Cultural requirements
 Reliable telephone
 Reliable Internet
 Reliable electrical service
 Criminal activity
 Transportation systems
 Weather conditions
 Employee factor risks

(Continued)

Travel Security—Pretravel Checklist

Insurance
Medical
Repatriation
Dental
Ophthalmic
Ambulance
Auto
Medical preparation
Predeparture checkups and screenings
Copies of medical records and prescriptions
Necessary vaccinations
Prescription medications
Over-the-counter medications
Eyeglasses and contact lenses/solutions
Spare eyeglasses and contact lenses
Eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions
Finance
Employee payments
Local bank account
International credit/debit cards
Local credit cards

Security

Types of crime
Onsite security
Travel security
Emergency response team
24-h communications
Emergency meeting points
Emergency evacuation plans
Normal communications
High-risk areas identified
Travel itineraries provided
Employee and family member training
Accommodations clearance

Transportation

International driving permits required
Car service/security provided

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