



How to plan for travel emergencies

This guide outlines how to prepare a formal travel emergency response plan, working closely with your travel management company.



Introduction

More and more businesses are expanding into emerging markets. With this trend comes an increase in operations within complex or hostile environments or, at the very least, unfamiliar territories.

What's more, recent crisis-hit regions like Ukraine and Thailand, or unexpected natural disasters like the Philippines typhoon and the Japanese tsunami, remind us that emergencies can occur suddenly in areas we previously considered as relatively contained.

The possibility of being caught out in this way - and the implications for business travel and business continuity - shows the real importance of contingency planning.

Ever since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and more recent crises like the Arab Spring, companies are getting better at preparing themselves with risk and evacuation strategies. But there is still plenty of room for improvement.

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1. The key elements of advance planning

Regardless of which travel management company (TMC) you work with, the more thorough your own company's emergency planning - the more effective your partnership with your TMC will be in moments of crisis.

Apart from the inconvenience of arranging emergency travel, the considerable risks of being unprepared for the worst are business interruption and reputation, and exposure to legal liability as a result. Employees' lives may even be in danger.

Good emergency planning must be based on reliable tracking of your travellers, effective communication with them at all times, and preparing them appropriately for the risks they may face. More specifically, you'll need to prepare a formal emergency response plan, work closely with your TMC in preparing the plan and communicate your emergency strategy formally to employees as part of an overall travel policy.



2. Where is 'high risk' for you?

As we've said, your employees may be at risk in unexpected places and in unexpected ways. You'll need to classify the high risk destinations that apply to your company.



SOS

Some may be well-known hot spots where political instability prevails. But there are other factors too. Unfamiliarity with a destination can make travellers vulnerable. So, too, can fatigue - for example when there is a need to drive following a long flight. Alternatively, illness or crime can be major setbacks - particularly in areas without effective medical or policing structures.

There are several companies that specialise in providing information about unstable locations and in supporting travellers with medical emergencies far from home. For example, ATPI works in partnership with International SOS, using fully integrated data to help clients in difficulty. See the 'medical and security specialists' section on page 11.

There are also useful government websites that provide reliable information on currently risky areas, or you may have your own resources to research these.

3. Know where your travellers are and how to contact them

It may sound obvious, but it's crucially important to use a tool that helps you track all your travellers easily.

Your TMC should help you with this. By booking through your TMC, key data on traveller movements is safely stored and easily accessible through employee tracking systems. Set up pretrip reporting to identify all those booked to highrisk destinations.

For effective communication, remind all your employees to keep their travel profile up to date, so that you're able to contact them quickly should the need arise. Also make it clear to them how you will get in touch with them in an emergency.



4. Who needs to be involved?

However much they may seem like seasoned travellers, always prepare employees going to highrisk areas for the possibility their trip may be cut short. Make high-risk destination pre-trip briefings compulsory for all travellers affected.

Even though there may be many employees who are not expected to travel to dangerous regions, or whose regular travel would not normally be considered risky, you should ensure your 'duty of care' policy is communicated clearly to everyone in the company, including what to do in an emergency and who to notify. For more details read our e-guide 'How to write an effective travel policy'.



5. Create an Emergency Response Plan

This is a fundamental part of the emergency planning process. At ATPI we work closely with clients at the start of our relationship, but however long you have been with your existing TMC, we recommend you review your contingency plan together regularly.

The plan should include:

- A step by step guide setting out responsibilities, actions and information required in the event of an emergency
- Clearly defined expectations of what your TMC will provide and the information they will need from you
- How travellers can get travel information while on the move, and how you will communicate with them
- A guide to the information you would need to give to your travellers, such as the procedure in the event of loss of mobile communications
- Details of a nominated spokesperson who would communicate the emergency to the wider business
- Key contacts at your TMC - including out of hours



6. Responding when crisis hits

In this part of the guide we focus on what to expect from your TMC once you've received an emergency call or been made aware of a crisis situation - and what they are likely to need from you to help make the travel process as efficient as possible.

Given our large number of clients in the energy sector – we recognise the high risk nature of the industry both in terms of personal risk (accident and injury) and the location of oil & gas projects (potential diseases) but also geo-political risks in certain energy hot spots. ATPI has developed a well-tested response service that works in tandem with the client's own emergency planning - our guidance is based on the travel-related services ATPI provides:

- 6a.** The emergency response team
- 6b.** Locating and moving your travellers
- 6c.** The right technology
- 6d.** The importance of communication
- 6e.** Partnerships and specialist support

6a. The emergency response team

Once we activate our emergency team, we create a 'Situation Room' either at our office or a room you may have designated for emergencies – as long as it has the right tools available to help handle emergencies (for example multiple phones, and connectivity to our booking systems). If appropriate, we can also set up a team on the ground - for example at a strategically located airport or hotel.



6b. Locating and moving your travellers

Working 24/7, we start by helping you to locate all your travellers and determine the best way to get them home.

Using our global network of contacts - we book the most logical flights based on the information we have. As new information comes in, we alter bookings as appropriate. It may be that the employee cannot get to the airport until the following day, or we may discover there is a closer airport.



6c. The right technology

We have a proprietary traveller tracking tool, (ATPI's Employee Tracking System (ETS)) which takes information about travellers' whereabouts from the global distribution system (GDS) used for booking and distributing airline tickets. This enables us to see where the traveller is going and when.

If, for safety and security reasons you need to track your travellers further, we are able to do this via their company mobile. There are also other methods for tracking in remote locations, for example special wristbands.

Our own flight booking technology, with its global reach, will give you the best opportunity in the market to find seats for your travellers - as options are often very limited at times of crisis.

6d. The importance of communication

Throughout a crisis, effective communication is vital. Having an on-site emergency team makes this easier, so that our team and your key representative can make decisions quickly, face-to-face - rather than by phone. Decide who will be responsible for communication at your end.

We use dedicated phone numbers to handle an emergency. Typically, an ATPI manager will be in hourly contact - day and night - with our team on the ground to ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to handle the situation.

6e. Partnerships and specialist support

Response times are much faster when you know who to call. Our global network of key travel contacts - such as senior people at airlines or airports - makes a big difference to how quickly we can act on behalf of clients.

Our specialist in-house team that handles passports and visas - often a cause of delay for unexpected onward travel - helps to avoid further disruption in challenging circumstances.



7. The value of post-emergency analysis

Once the emergency situation has been managed, it's of benefit to analyse the travel response process, and ways which it could be improved should future crisis arise.

Perhaps there are processes that could be implemented to improve communication or arrangements for onward travel – some of our clients run dummy emergency response days and it's important that both senior stakeholders and employees understand how travel fits into these situations.



8. Our role as a specialist TMC

Our extensive experience of helping clients in crisis situations means we can activate our emergency response teams very quickly, in any location.

Here are some short case study examples, for more information on similar topics including Duty of Care visit the [ATPI Knowledge Hub](#)

Emergency repatriation

Our client is a global leader in oil field services, employing over 18,000 people worldwide. It needed help evacuating some 300 staff from Algeria because of the security risk posed by the terrorist attack on the Amenas gas plant. Within an hour of the call, we set up a disaster recovery team at an airport hotel in London, UK where the team remained on-call / physically at the airport for 72 hours. We arranged airside passes for our client's representatives and worked with our client and its partners to obtain passenger lists. Then we booked onward travel for employees to their home nation.

Emergency evacuation

An oil and gas company needed immediate evacuation from a North Sea oil installation, shut down because of failing anchor chains. Within an hour of the call, we set up an emergency response team and rescue centre in an Aberdeen hotel. During the next 12 hours, all evacuees were delivered safely to the hotel and onward travel by rail/air was arranged (with destinations from mainland Europe to Manila).

9. Medical and security specialists

You may already work with a medical and security specialist company. If so, it is essential that your TMC and these suppliers work hand in hand during an emergency.

Here at ATPI, we have a number of global strategic alliances with medical and security services providers, including [International SOS](#). This enables us to deliver integrated data on traveller medical requirements, destination and travel risks, traveller tracking and on the ground support for medical or security events.

Quote from Wendy Stachowiak, Vice President Global Travel Industry Relations, International SOS

‘Travel risk mitigation plans should protect all employees, including travellers, expatriates and emerging market employees, and there should be a focus on Duty of Care. Plans should include clear and comprehensive policies governing business travel as well as the ability to locate and communicate with travellers within minutes of a significant event. Duty of Care is not just applicable in what your organisation identifies as ‘high risk’ countries; the most common risks we see are road traffic accidents – people driving whilst on business, or as a pedestrian in cities like Paris or Rome. As well as the one in a million, organisations need to look after travellers in regards to the more every day, and be prepared if prescription medication is lost or employees become sick away from home. Travel risk mitigation includes preparation and anticipation of a range of very relevant scenarios’.

In conclusion...

Our advice is to ensure your TMC is properly briefed on the specific needs of travellers and individual itineraries in order to advise on the best Duty of Care plan – this will depend on many variables such as your business sector, geography and status of employee travelling.

Find out more

For more information on Duty of Care for travellers and to talk to the ATPI team about emergency travel, please email hello@atpi.com



Want to know more?

For examples of case studies and more how-to guides, visit the [ATPI Knowledge Hub](#).





ATPI is among the world's leading travel management companies. Our dynamic and innovative approach to savings and service has earned us one of the highest client retention rates in the industry.

With over 100 offices worldwide, the company has successful operations in corporate travel, corporate event management, online travel technology and specialist travel management for a number of key industries.

