



The 3 Risks You Face When Employees Are Traveling For You

by [Mike Kelly](#) on Nov 28, 2014



Business leaders have long recognized that their greatest assets are their people.

However, attracting top talent is only one dimension of a people-driven business — employees must be fully engaged and motivated to be top performers. Corporate culture and commitment to your employees' health, safety, and well-being is not only your duty, but is crucial for sustained employee engagement.

Here's how HR and risk managers can take a proactive approach to safeguarding traveling employees while avoiding the following types of risks:

1. People risk

As an HR or risk professional, protecting the health and safety of your traveling staff should be a top priority.

Your employees need to know that their organization will take care of them, especially in case of an emergency while they're traveling. You should clearly communicate emergency protocols to your staff to ensure full awareness of all the health and safety measures available to them when traveling.

The company's actions during a crisis will leave a lasting impression – such decisive moments not only shape the perception of directly affected employees, but of the workforce as a whole. Make sure the impression your company leaves is a positive one.

2. Reputational risk

Typically the most overlooked type of risk, failing to adequately protect your traveling employees can also impact the perception of your company by external audiences. This includes your customers, potential customers and business partners.

In fact, CEOs and board members routinely list corporate reputation among their most valuable assets. Widespread coverage of a failure to protect or assist traveling employees in the event of an emergency could undermine your company's reputation, and rebuilding that reputation can be a difficult and expensive task.

3. Legal risk

Employees believe their employers have a duty to protect them and most often will blame the company if their health and safety is affected during a business trip abroad — potentially leading to litigation.

Employee protection may be viewed broadly under the umbrella of Duty of Care, which enforces legal obligations on organizations to safeguard their employees' welfare.

Countries including those in North America (U.S. and Canada), European Union (France, Germany, Belgium, Spain), and Australia have comprehensive Duty of Care legislation that applies to both in-country and travel situations and where courts have awarded damages to employees who have been harmed either while in their home countries or during business trips abroad.

At minimum, enterprise-wide resources to protect your employees should provide:

- **Detailed information about employees' destinations to help protect their health and safety** while they're away – both general and customized to traveler needs. This includes all relevant health and safety information from political unrest, military and terrorist activities, to infectious diseases, vaccination requirements, weather, cultural etiquette, driving rules, etc.
- **Clear communication of essential resources available** to your employees in the event of a medical or safety emergency while traveling.
- **An enterprise-wide crisis preparedness plan** to avoid emergencies and disasters abroad and help your key stakeholders understand their specific roles – and how to react – during a crisis
- **A crisis response plan in the event an employee experiences an emergency abroad.** This should include detailed protocols and clearly-communicated responsibilities of all stakeholders to ensure effective and rapid action to assist the affected employee and ensure their safety.

Implementing a proactive plan

Protecting your employees' health, safety and well-being while they're on assignment shouldn't mean resorting to short cuts and cost savings.

What it does mean is taking the time and effort to design and implement the best proactive plans and emergency resources necessary for not only protecting your people, but your organization's future.

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