FCM INSIGHT

Understanding travel risk management

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The world is an increasingly dangerous place, so the health and safety of business travellers is rightly at the top of the corporate agenda.

According to 2017 research by Ipsos Mori, 72% of business travellers and travel managers believe that health and security risks have increased in the past year whilst 80% of organisations have modified travel itineraries due to health or security concerns. Furthermore, over half of organisations believe the health and travel security risks faced by business travellers will increase over the next 12 months, and a similar proportion are increasing their investment to mitigate the risks involved.

72%

of business travellers and travel managers believe that health and security risks have increased in the past year

Corporates' duty of care to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees,

wherever they work, is a legal requirement in many countries. The UK was amongst the first to legislate company duty of care obligations when it passed 2007's Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act. Australia, France and the US also have laws in place.

Legally, employers must not only conform to relevant health & safety and employment law, but also have a moral and ethical duty not to cause, or fail to prevent, physical or psychological injury (to their employees), and must fulfil their responsibilities with regard to personal injury and negligence claims.

Employers' obligations

Employers' obligations are wide-ranging. They include clearly defining jobs and undertaking risk assessments, to ensuring a safe work environment and that staff do not work excessive hours, to protecting staff from bullying, harassment or discrimination. These stipulations apply equally to employees travelling for business, anywhere in the world. The penalties for breaches range from unlimited fines up to imprisonment for senior executives.

Unsurprisingly, corporate attitudes to Travel Risk Management (TRM) have changed significantly in the decade since the Corporate Manslaughter Act came into effect. The heightened global risk of terrorism, coupled with natural and man-made disasters that have taken place around the world have forced corporates to ensure that the steps they take to protect their employees are proportionate and based on real threats.

The Business Impact of Travel Risk survey, published in February 2017 by International SOS, puts the improvement of internal communication and traveller education on travel risks at the top of 70% of European organisations' priority lists.

The survey found that travel security risk mitigation programmes are undermined by a lack of effective communication, and that 60% of senior executives have only a partial or no understanding at all of medical threats faced by their mobile workforce. Other findings were as follows.

46%
say health and travel security incidents have an impact on business continuity

50%
of organisations have not conducted a comprehensive review of their mobile workforce's health

27%
are either moderately or not confident in their level of preparedness

61%
do not have a wellness programme in place

TMCs have a key role to play in supporting their clients' duty of care responsibilities. Although the majority of safety-related incidents faced by business travellers tend to be low-risk (e.g. lost baggage), the range of risk is becoming broader. From theft leading to loss of sensitive company information up to major terrorist incidents.

TMCs are therefore stepping up their efforts to support clients with their TRM solutions and the creation or revision of crisis management plans and response processes tailored to their clients' structures and cultures.

FCm's TRM product leader Pip English emphasises that the focus should not be solely on worst case scenarios. "The threat from terrorist activity is real and should definitely be taken into account in formulating an organisation's crisis management plan. However, risk related to geo-political activity or health concerns tends to affect a far greater number of travellers", says English.

"Terrorism inspires fear and grabs headlines but is often isolated, such as lone-wolf attacks, regional geo-political unrest and 2016's coup in Turkey. Risks can be much more widespread. For example

infectious disease in most virulent form (and indeed at flu-level) can be hard to contain from person to person.

Organisations should prepare for the worst but not at the expense of the frequent."

Pip cites the continuing refugee situation as an example of geo-political threat. "According to the UN refugee agency UNHCR, there are over two million Syrian refugees in Turkey, a further one million in Lebanon and 600,000 in Jordan. This has strained water supplies and health infrastructure and placed an additional load on security services. The knock-on effect of this is depleted vaccine stocks in many EU nations, so routine vaccinations for residents, refugees, immigrants, ex-pats and business travellers will be impacted."

"Polarising events such as the tensions over North Korea, and even elections in European countries should also be on corporates' TRM radar" **says Pip.**

Be prepared

So what should travel managers be doing to meet every-increasing duty of care obligations to mitigate travel risk?

80%

of organisations have modified travel itineraries due to health or security concerns.

1. There are five stages of travel risk management; identifying the risk, preparing the traveller, tracking the traveller, communication and response. Each should be included in any TRM plan.

2. Risk varies according to location, environment and circumstance. Make sure the risks in each location your travellers visit is visible – not just the life-threatening ones. Just knowing where is a traveller is doesn't mean you have a workable plan in place to help when things go wrong. Make it clear to the traveller what those risks are, what measures are being taken in the interests of their safety.

3. Prepare your travellers before they travel. Make sure they have the latest advice on vaccination requirements and where to get them. Educate them on potential health risks, how to prevent them and what to do if they do fall ill whilst travelling on business.

4. It's important that health response plans cover extreme eventualities such as a country closing its borders due to disease outbreak, but also more everyday risks such as traffic accidents and personal theft. Travellers need to know what action to take and the support they will receive in these circumstances.

5. Having a TRM plan is great, but response processes, communication channels and traveller perceptions of the available support need to be checked and reviewed regularly. If they don't work, you could be in real trouble.

6. Your TMC can work with you to review or implement your TRM solution and support your travelling employees with their own Customer Crisis Plan.

About FCM

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It has always been personalised service that sets FCM apart from the rest and we blend this with innovative technology and unrivalled access to content to drive the optimum performance of your travel programme.

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