

Personal Security Checklist for Travellers

Prior to Travel:

Check State Department website at <http://travel.state.gov> for travel advisories.

Check the CIA Homepage at <http://www.cia.gov> (“The world fact book”).

The Centre for Disease Control site at <http://www.cdc.gov> will give you the list of shots you need and precautions to take.

Go to <http://www.asirt.org> for information about local driving dangers/conditions

- Leave a copy of your itinerary at home and with your supervisor. Include hotel website/email.
- Have a current emergency contact form left with your supervisor.
- Arrange to make regularly scheduled check-in calls at home and at work.
- Make sure your passport is current and not too close to the expiration date.
- Photocopy the contents of your wallet, passport and visa. Include passport-sized photos of yourself in case you need to have it replaced. Make a list of the overseas contact numbers for your credit card company. Keep copies in your carry-on bag and in your checked luggage.
- Make sure your medical coverage is effective overseas. Bring all prescription medication in original containers. Keep in two separate places. Bring copies of any prescriptions you need.

General Recommendations:

- Keep a low profile. Dress and behave conservatively.
- Do not wear clothing with obvious Western/American logos.
- Lock all luggage. Do not place anything on your luggage identifying your nationality.
- Vary regular travel routes by changing travel times or using different roads.
- Avoid areas where you are likely to be victimized. These include crowded mass transit stations, tourist attractions, market places, festivals and marginal areas of cities or towns.
- Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets. Try not to travel alone at night.
- Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.
- Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.
- Beware of strangers who approach you, offering bargains or to be your guide.
- Move with purposeful strides. If you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority. Generally, families or women with children are the safest persons to ask for directions.
- Know how to use local pay telephones and have change to do so. Consider cell phone service that works in the country you are travelling in. Obtain local/international calling cards.

- Learn enough of the local language so you can communicate your need for help, the police, or a doctor. Carry a list of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and nearest friendly embassy or consulate.
- If you are confronted, don't fight back. Give up your valuables. Fight only as a last resort.
- Select running routes with care.
- In nightclubs and restaurants locate the functional emergency exits before any emergency.

Airline Travel Safety:

- Select an airline with a good safety record. Your travel agent will have this information.
- Try to schedule direct flights.
- Prefer wide-bodied aircraft.
- Arrive at the airport early enough to clear security. Check your person and carry on bag for anything that might be construed as a weapon.
- Clear the check-in area as quickly as possible and move into the secure part of the terminal.
- Watch your belongings as they go through the X-ray screening machine. Make sure you watch the bags as they enter the machine and then pass through the metal detector in time to pick up your bag as it clears the machine.
- Upon arrival use hotel provided transportation where possible. If you take a cab, use only one with appropriate markings. Check license in cab and compare with face of the driver.

Hotel Safety:

- Stay at reputable hotels and motels. The large, western Hotel chains usually have adequate security. Select a hotel that allows you to take different routes to your workplace.
- Ask for a second story room at a motel. Ground floor rooms are more susceptible to break in. Staying on the second floor also makes it easier to escape if there is a fire. Try to avoid staying above the third floor in any country without a modern and well-equipped fire department. Never stay above the seventh floor.
- Check the windows and doors to make sure they are secure.
- Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire. Be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located. Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit. Do the same for an alternate exit. This will allow you to reach the exit if the corridor is dark or filled with smoke. Consider travelling with an emergency escape hood.
- Don't open the door to anybody unless you are familiar with him or her. Talk through the door without opening it. Hotel door chains are practically useless.
- Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby.
- Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.

- Do not leave business documents, especially proprietary material, in the room unsecured.
- Let someone know when you expect to return if you are out late at night.
- If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.

Travelling in country:

Car

- When renting a car, choose a type commonly available locally. Choose a model with a good safety rating. If possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed.
- Get the latest model available, make certain it is in good repair and that it has emergency roadside equipment.
- Always wear seatbelts.
- Pick a car with power locks and windows.
- Select a car with an air conditioner. This will allow you to drive with windows closed. This prevents items from being snatched from inside your car.
- Check the car every time that you do not have direct eye contact with the car.
- Try not to park your car on the street overnight. If the hotel or municipality does not have a parking garage or other secure area, select a well-lit area.
- Keep all doors locked while driving.
- Don't leave valuables on your seats while driving or when you park.
- Travel using different roads.

Choosing the best road:

- Drive on a main road.
- Travel roads with more than one lane.
- Prefer roads that are close to a police station.
- When driving use the rear view mirror to detect any cars that may be following you.
- Be aware of the location of safe-havens.
- Pay attention to any unusual objects on the road (road blocks, cars stopped on side roads).
- Suggested roads for daily travel routine:

Option 1: _____

Option 2: _____

Option 3: _____

- As much as possible, avoid driving at night.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Don't exit your car if there are suspicious looking individuals in the area.

Public Transportation

- Check the Consular Information Sheets to find out if a country has a pattern of tourists being targeted by criminals on public transportation.
- Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings. Beware of unmarked cabs. Choose them yourself and at random.
- Avoid mass transportation at night. Spend the extra money and take a taxi.
- Robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourist routes is a serious problem. It is more common on overnight trains.

- Do not accept food or drink from strangers. It may be drugged.
- On overnight trains, lock the sleeping compartment.
- Do not be afraid to inform the conductor or other official if you feel threatened. Police are frequently assigned to ride trains that have been targeted before.
- The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses used by tourists.

How to Handle Money Safely:

- Separate your cash into two (or more) portions. Keep some of the money in your wallet and the rest in a belt or separate place on your person. If you have a purse carry it in front of you, over your shoulder across your chest, hold on to it with your hands and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.
- Beware of pickpockets. Anyone can be a pickpocket. Generally, a pickpocket will use an accomplice to distract you while your pocket is being picked. A common ploy is to have an accomplice bump into you but anything that will distract you will also be effective.
- To avoid carrying large amounts of cash, change your travellers' checks or withdraw money from ATMs, as you need currency.
- Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction. Check periodically for unauthorized charges.
- Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money. Do not change money on the black market.
- If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims. After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of credit cards, traveller's checks, airline tickets and your passport. This will be much easier to accomplish if you have remembered to photocopy the contents of your wallet and if you have written down the overseas contact numbers of your credit card companies. Contact the local embassy or consulate to replace your passport.

Travel to High-Risk Areas:

If you must travel in an area where there has been a history of terrorist attacks or kidnapping or that is the subject of a State Department traveller alert, be sure you:

- Register with your country's embassy or consulate upon arrival.
- Do not discuss personal matters and your itinerary with casual acquaintances or strangers.
- Leave no personal or business papers in your hotel room.
- Watch for people or vehicles following you. Remember the golden rule of counter surveillance; If you see the same person or vehicle two times, separated by time and distance, you are probably being followed. If it happens three times, you are being followed. Contact the local police and the nearest friendly embassy or consulate for guidance.
- Avoid predictable times and routes of travel.

- Note the locations of safe havens, such as police stations, hotels, and hospitals.
- Let someone else know what your travel plans are. Keep them informed if you change your plans. Arrange to make regular “check in” calls.
- Select your own taxicabs at random. Don't take a vehicle that is not clearly identified as a taxi. Compare the face of the driver with the one posted on his or her license.
- Refuse unexpected packages.
- Check for loose wires, packages or other suspicious objects around your car. Check under the car when you park. Note the presence of any object under your car when you return.
- Be sure your vehicle is mechanically sound in case you need to resort to high-speed or evasive driving.
- Drive with car windows closed in crowded streets. Bombs can be thrown through open windows and it is easier for an assailant to enter your car if the window is open.
- If you are ever in a situation where somebody starts shooting, drop to the floor or get down as low as possible. Do the same if you are in a building and you hear an explosion outside. Often, people will rush to windows after a blast in order to see what happened and are killed as the pressure wave, moving slower than the speed of sound, blows out the windows. Don't move until you are sure the danger has passed. Take cover behind or under a solid object. If you must move stay as low as possible.

Hijacking/Hostage Situations:

As a general rule, the most dangerous phases of a hijacking or hostage situation are the beginning and, if there is a rescue attempt, the end. Terrorists are typically are most violent and nervous during the initial moments of a hijacking. You must force yourself to remain calm and alert. The following recommendations are from the Department of State. These recommendations are under review in light of the events of 9/11. We agree that these guidelines are appropriate unless and until it becomes apparent that the hijackers intend to use the aircraft as a missile. In that event, it is necessary to resist at all costs.

- Do not resist. Follow their demands and make no sudden or threatening movements.
- Do not fight or try to escape unless you are certain of being successful.
- Force yourself to remain calm and prepare yourself mentally, physically and emotionally for the possibility of a long ordeal.
- Do nothing to bring attention upon your self. Avoid direct eye contact with the hijackers and do not obviously observe their actions. Initially, do not attempt to use a cell phone to call for help. Later, a cell phone may prove invaluable.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages. Consume little food and drink.
- Cooperate with the hijackers. Do not complain or be confrontational.
- Expect to be interrogated. Answer questions directly but don't volunteer information or make unnecessary overtures.
- As the situation becomes less volatile, you can make reasonable requests for personal comforts such as going to the bathroom or getting something to drink.

- If you are taken hostage for a longer period of time, try to establish a rapport with your captors, avoiding confrontational subjects such as politics in favour of universally understood topics like family.
- Try to keep your mind active and try and exercise regularly if possible.
- Eat what they give you, whenever it is given. You have no way of knowing if your food or water will be withheld later on.
- If you are a religious person, pray earnestly and often. Don't become despondent. People are looking for you and are trying to get you safely returned.
- Remember the key point is to make a potential aggressor's job more difficult. A serious criminal or terrorist will watch his or her target before attempting his crime / terrorist act. If they see that you are not an easy target, they will most likely move on to someone who is.