

Addressing Safety and Security Issues During Work-Related Travel



Introduction

Workers may encounter dangerous situations when travelling abroad. This guidance document describes potential safety and security hazards to which workers can be exposed during work-related travel and recommends control measures to keep workers safe. Employers are responsible for identifying hazards and taking steps to mitigate risks. A [risk assessment](#), which considers all possible situations that can affect a worker's safety and security while abroad, should be completed prior to travel. The relevant information should also be included in the emergency response plan developed by the employer and communicated to workers before travel abroad.

For information on general health and safety tips associated with travel, refer to Travel Health and Safety – Considerations for Work-Related Travel. Visit the Government of Canada's [website](#) for destination-specific travel advice and advisories and to sign up for the Registration of Canadians abroad. Visit the page often, prior to travel and while away.

Crime

Crime refers to illegal activities punishable by law and can include anything from violent crime (e.g., armed robbery and murder) to petty acts (e.g., pickpocketing). Always review the crime trends at the destination. Employers can help prevent workers from becoming victims of crime by implementing control measures, including:

- Avoid destinations with high crime rates
- Limit travel at night and do not travel alone
- Use trustworthy transportation means (e.g., licensed taxis)
- Choose accommodations with security measures (e.g., security guards)
- Avoid staying in accommodations that are next to a set of stairs or on the ground floor
- Lock all windows and doors at the accommodation and in vehicles
- Do not carry large amounts of cash
- Make sure personal belongings (e.g., passport, travel documents) are kept safe at all times

Kidnappings

In some countries, workers are at risk of kidnapping for terrorist, political, financial, or other reasons. Express kidnapping, where an individual is taken for a short period of time and forced to provide money from an automated teller machine (ATM), can also happen. Generally, the risk is highest in areas where there is conflict (e.g., war, violent demonstrations), the presence of terrorist groups, or where crime rates are high. To protect workers, consider these general control measures:

- Avoid areas where the risk of kidnapping is elevated
- Only travel with people who can be trusted (e.g., coworkers, hired security)
- Use ATMs only during the day and in reliable locations (e.g., inside banks, malls)
- Use only licensed taxis and other transportation methods
- Minimize displaying any signs of wealth (e.g., jewelry, brand-name clothes)
- Stay aware of the surroundings and if any suspicious activity is observed, leave the area and report it to local authorities
- Avoid discussing travel plans and any other personal matters where strangers can hear
- Avoid sharing location information on social media and restrict access to your social media accounts
- Know how to get in touch with the nearest Canadian government office

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For more information, refer to the Government of Canada's [Kidnappings outside Canada](#) page.

Mass Gatherings

Mass gatherings bring a large number of people together and can increase the risk of injury. Stampedes, violence, fires, and building collapses are the types of incidents that can occur at large-scale events. Whether workers are attending mass gatherings spontaneously or as part of a planned event, there are several ways they can be kept safe. These include:

- Avoid large, congested areas with limited exit routes or medical facilities
- Stay away from situations where there may be escalating tensions in the public (e.g., among religious or political groups, public protests)
- Locate emergency exits and medical facilities, if any, upon arriving at the location
- In the case of a stampede, keep firm footing and move towards the edge of the crowd. If you fall, curl into a ball and get up as soon as possible

Refer to [Mass gatherings \(large-scale events\)](#) from the Government of Canada for more information.

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters (e.g., cyclones, [earthquakes](#), floods, hurricanes, tornadoes) can happen anywhere and can have negative impacts on health and safety. Injuries from natural disasters include crush-related injuries, electrocutions, and drowning. Control measures that can be used to protect workers from natural disasters on a trip include:

- Monitor local weather warnings and advisories
- Follow the instructions of local emergency authorities (e.g., proceed to local shelter if accommodations are damaged)
- Prepare an emergency supply kit with food, water, medicine, and personal items
- Avoid downed power lines and interrupted gas lines
- Do not approach fast-moving water during floods
- Only use gasoline-, propane-, natural gas-, or charcoal-burning devices outdoors to minimize the potential for carbon monoxide exposures
- Avoid potential exposures to hazardous materials like asbestos or lead that could have become airborne during the event
- Avoid floodwater and standing water

Terrorism

Terrorism can happen anywhere and often happens without any warning. Target areas can include government buildings, airports, tourist attractions, places of worship, and public transportation systems. Terrorists may use certain occasions to plan attacks (e.g., public celebrations, sporting events, elections). The following precautions may be used to reduce the risk of workers becoming targets of attacks:

- Minimize time spent in public places, especially during public celebrations and demonstrations
- Avoid being near unattended packages or suspicious activity and report anything suspicious to local authorities
- Do not accept unexpected packages
- Do not wear any clothing or jewelry that can identify oneself as a foreigner. Blend in with the locals
- Always be aware of your general surroundings and safe spaces such as police stations
- Have a plan for an escape route in case of an emergency

Traffic and Road Safety

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Accidents involving bicycles, buses, cars, motorcycles, trucks, and pedestrians are common when travelling. Unsafe vehicles, poor road conditions, lack of streetlights, unprotected cliffs and inadequate medical care are some of the risk factors for injuries and deaths. Travel fatigue, lack of familiarity with the roads, and driving on the opposite side of the road can also put workers at risk of getting into an accident. Employers should implement these following general precautions to protect workers while travelling:

- Always wear seat belt
- Do not drive impaired or enter a vehicle with an impaired driver
- Always follow the applicable legislation for driving and ask that all drivers do the same (e.g., obeying the speed limit, vehicle inspections, insurance)
- Avoid riding motorcycles. Wear a helmet if riding cannot be avoided
- Do not drive in mountainous areas
- Stay aware of the surroundings and avoid any distractions (e.g., cell phone use)
- Avoid areas with inadequate street lighting

Consider these additional precautions for pedestrians:

- Cross the road at designated crosswalks or intersections and follow local regulations and protocols
- Walk on sidewalks, where possible
- Avoid distractions while walking (e.g., using cell phones, wearing earbuds)
- Carry a flashlight and wear something reflective if walking at night
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing the road

Water Safety

Some organizations may require workers to work on, near, or under water when abroad. Employers should be aware of the potential concerns when performing water-related work activities. A lack of familiarity with local water conditions and equipment being used (e.g., boating equipment), improper use of personal floatation devices (e.g., lifejackets), and diving into shallow waters are some of the risk factors that can contribute to injuries and deaths when travelling. General control measures that should be implemented include:

- Stay away from rocky coastal areas, which can be slippery and sharp
- Review the destination's local water conditions and currents and follow advice of local officials before performing any water-related activities
- Understand the hazards associated with animals at the destination (e.g., sea urchins, jellyfish, alligators)
- Always wear a life jacket when on a boat
- Avoid riding in boats with inexperienced or uncertified drivers
- Avoid swimming alone
- Look for rip currents when swimming and stay away from piers and jetties, which often have permanent rip currents flowing next to them
- Never dive into shallow water. If the depth of the water is unknown, avoid diving or enter feet first
- If scuba diving, make sure all workers are trained and have the proper gear

Refer to [Water safety abroad](#) from the Government of Canada for more information.

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