

The business traveler: safety, health and security tips

Introduction

Employees who travel for business, domestically and internationally, should be prepared for more than just business. They also should prepare for their personal safety and health, and the security of their valuables, communication devices and equipment. In addition to being prepared, business travelers should stay alert and vigilant to their surroundings at all times when traveling and in destinations away from home base.

This document offers a number of travel preparedness and loss prevention considerations to help business travelers have a safe, healthy and secure traveling experience.

Getting ready

Research the destination

- Be familiar with your travel destination before you leave.
 - > Get maps, including street maps, and directions. These will be helpful when driving.
- If you are traveling abroad:
 - > Find out if the State Department has issued any warning bulletins for the country to which you are traveling [travel.state.gov].
 - > Check commons tips for travel abroad listed on this Website.
 - > Keep the local U.S. Consulate phone numbers and address handy.
 - > Study local customs and culture before you go.
 - > If you need cell phone access while overseas, find out if your local cellular provider has cellular access from overseas. If not, rental cell phones are available.
 - > Contact your IT group to ascertain if your laptop can access “safe” wireless sites.
- Know “Driving Under the Influence” [DUI] and cell phone driving laws.
 - > Cell phone laws vary by country, state and, in some states, by locale/city. Some impose severe fines/consequences. [cellular-news.com/car_bans/]

Documentation and contacts

- Leave photocopies of important items before you travel with a friend or relative, including:
 - > Passport and/or citizenship documents
 - > Detailed itinerary and transportation tickets
 - > Credit and debit cards
- Carry your photo identification and the name of a person to contact with you in the event of serious illness or other emergency.

Credit cards/cash/valuables

- Leave unnecessary credit cards and expensive jewelry at home.
- Take a bank debit card and a small amount of cash.
- Contact your credit card companies regarding your trip to avoid having your cards temporarily frozen.

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- Use a money belt or concealed pouch for passport, cash and other valuables.
- If you are not taking a cell phone with you on your travel, take a phone card.

Health/medical needs

- Be conscientious of any allergies in which the local food may affect your health. Food preparation may not be similar to U.S. facilities or standards.
- Ask your doctor if there are any special precautions to take before you go and if you may need to take special medicines with you.
- Check with your doctor about needed pre-trip medical care long before the planned departure date.
 - > Some immunizations/precautionary measures need time before they become fully effective and some are done in a series, depending on where you are going. It is a good idea to have up-to-date tetanus and hepatitis shots.
 - > If you are under a doctor's care or anticipate continued care, pre-identify a local medical facility.
- Carry all prescription medicines in their original, labeled container to make customs' processing easier. Keep them in your carry-on luggage. Obtain the generic name of all prescription medicines for easy replacement at any pharmacy.
- If any medicine contains narcotics, carry a letter from your physician attesting to your need to take them.

Accessories

- Purchase needed accessories (i.e., voltage converter for your laptop or cell charger).

Illegal drug laws abroad

- Understand your vulnerability in the event of illegal drug charges.
 - > Once you leave the United States, you are not covered by U.S. laws and constitutional rights.
 - > A number of countries have stringent drug laws, which impose mandatory jail sentences for individuals convicted of possessing even small amounts of marijuana or cocaine for personal use. This can include seven-year terms or life, without the possibility of parole for drug violations.
 - > In many countries, bail is not granted when illegal drugs are involved.
 - > In many countries, the burden of "innocence" proof is on the accused.
 - > In some countries, evidence obtained illegally by local authorities may be admissible in court.
 - > Few countries offer illegal drug offenders jury trials. Some do not even require the prisoner's presence at his/her trial.

During travel

Personal considerations

- Keep your cell phone or phone cards and emergency numbers within easy reach in the event of an emergency.
- Be vigilant to your surroundings.
 - > Always be alert and think in terms of having a "safety zone" around you.
- Travel with companions whenever possible.
- Walk and stand confidently. Body language can convey strength or vulnerability.
- Avoid stating your name, hotel, or destination within hearing range of strangers.
- Be wary of friendly strangers, especially those who display great interest in your personal life or work schedule.

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- Avoid trouble rather than confront it.
- Carry a loud whistle and be prepared to use it to signal for help, if appropriate.
- Deal only with authorized agents when exchanging money or making purchases.

Baggage

- Travel with as few bags as possible.

Keys

- Carry car keys and house keys on separate chains (to minimize risk in case one is lost).

Airports

- Do not leave bags unattended.
- Check luggage as soon as possible.
- Remain within the security area.

Travel by taxi

Before hailing a taxi

- For international travel, have the address of your destination written out in the local language and carry it with you.
- Know the route to your destination so you will be aware if the taxi driver takes you a different or longer way.

The taxi and driver

- Do not use unlicensed taxis. Be sure the photo on the displayed license is that of the driver.
- Know the number of the taxi.
- If you feel uncomfortable about the driver, don't use the taxi.
- If there is no meter or if the meter is inoperable, negotiate a fixed fee in advance.

Riding and arriving

- Lock the door once seated.
- Never get out in deserted areas.
- Ask the taxi driver to wait until you enter your destination. Have the key ready to enter immediately.

Travel by car

General rules

- Carry a proper driver's license.
- Be familiar with driving regulations, road signs and traffic conditions, particularly when traveling in other countries.
- Anytime you approach or exit your car you are vulnerable to potential assault. Maintain your "safety zone."
- Do not leave valuables where they are visible.
 - > If you leave them in a car, lock them in the trunk.
- Park in well-lit, high traffic areas, near building doors.
- Keep the gas tank at least half full.

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Rental cars

- Familiarize yourself with the automobile. Test specific equipment before driving, such as brakes, lights and wipers.

Driving precautions

- Never let anyone enter or place a package inside the car unless you are present.
- Lock doors immediately when entering the car. Keep doors locked at all times and windows raised around cities, where people can reach in and unlock the door.
- Don't roll down the window if someone knocks. Drive away slowly.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers.
- Don't stop for stranded drivers.

Travel by public transportation

- Take as little luggage as possible, ideally, no more than you can comfortably carry.
- Remember to maintain your "safety zone."
 - > Avoid carrying a wallet in your hip or outer coat pocket.
 - > Carry a purse/bag that you may firmly grip or secure to your body.
 - > At a bus/train terminal or taxi stop be cautious.
 - Avoid dimly lit or vacant taxi stops and entrances to stations and terminals.
 - Avoid being jostled by people at taxi stops and stations.
 - > On subways, avoid being isolated or easily cut off from others.
 - > On buses, sit in an aisle seat near the driver.
- Avoid nighttime arrivals.
- Stand back from the curb or tracks while waiting for public transportation.

Hotel safety and security

Making reservations

- Select a hotel in a safe area and near your business or conference activity.
- Select a larger/major hotel with safety and security features:
 - > Fire detection and suppression systems (smoke alarms, fire sprinkler systems)
 - > Security boxes
 - > Security devices or 24-hour attendant
- When making reservations, request a room between the second and seventh floors.
 - > Rooms above ground level are less accessible from the outside to strangers.
 - > Rooms below the seventh floor generally provide quicker egress to the ground floor in the event of an emergency and are more accessible for fire equipment.

Protecting you and your personal property

- Guard your baggage carefully. Do not leave it unattended.

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- Protect your name and room identity.
 - > Don't mention your name or room number or allow an associate or hotel employee to do so in the hearing range of others.
 - > Instruct the phone operator to not give your room number to callers. The operator can connect the caller to your room or take a message.
 - > Do not display guest room keys or cards or leave them on restaurant tables, at the swimming pool or other places where they can easily be stolen.
 - > If you believe someone may have a key card to your room, insist that the room be re-keyed. A new key can be generated within minutes.
- If you see any suspicious activity, report it to hotel management immediately.
- Use the room safe, hotel safe or safety deposit box for storing laptops, valuables or important documents that you do not need to keep with you.
- Additionally, for laptops:
 - > Do not leave laptop computers or computer bags in public areas such as hotel lobbies, luggage carts, convention rooms or display booths. In a busy place, it is easy for someone to walk away with a laptop and not be noticed.
 - > Lock laptop computers to a fixed object using a cable and lock device in the absence of the locking station.
 - > For a computer that is too big to store in a room or hotel safe, store it in a closet in an unmarked bag or locked in a suitcase.
 - > Remove or back up sensitive information on a disc or CD. Do not leave the copy in the hotel room.

In your room

- Do not open the door for strangers. Use the door's peephole to identify a caller.
- Do not let maintenance persons inside without calling the front desk for verification.
- Never entertain strangers in your room.
- Use room service after 10 p.m. and before 7 a.m. These are vulnerable hours for being entrapped in an unwelcome situation.
- Check to make sure all windows and sliding doors are securely locked.

Getting to and from

- Remember to maintain your "safety zone."
- Return before nightfall when possible.
- Don't advertise that you are out of the room. Leave a radio or the television on.
- When returning to your hotel/motel late in the evening, use the main entrance.
- Close the door securely whenever you are in your room. Use all locking devices on the door. If there is an adjoining room, make sure the door is locked on your side.

Fire precautions and what to do in the event of fire

- Study the fire safety instructions on the inside of your room door.
- Identify fire exits and count the number of doors between you and the exit.

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- In the event of fire where instructions are given by public announcement:
 - > Follow instructions given over a hotel public address system or by hotel employees unless you are sure that the instructions are incorrect because of your direct personal knowledge of the situation.
- In the event of fire where no instructions are given and the instructions on the inside of the door do not instruct on what action to take:
 - > Contact hotel front desk for instructions; otherwise:
 - > If the door is hot or there appears to be a lot of smoke, leave door closed and stay in the room.
 - Soak towels and bed linens and place around door edges to prevent smoke from entering the room.
 - Fill bathtub with water for future use.
 - > If window is operable, open it to let rescuers know where you are located.
 - Follow rescuers' instructions when contact is made.

Conclusion

Preparing for your travel and common sense can go a long way toward preventing loss or damage while traveling or staying in a hotel or resort. Alertness, vigilance and caution can be among the more effective crime prevention actions that a business traveler can take.

References

- American Hotel and Lodging Association: ahla.com
- American Automobile Association: aaa.com
- U.S. Department of State: travel.state.gov
- World Health Organization: who.int/ith/en/
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office (travel advice, countries and regions): fco.gov.uk
- Cell Phones and Driving: cellular-news.com/car_bans

For more information, log in to the Risk Control Customer Portal at travelers.com/riskcontrol. (Need help? Read our [Registration Quick Guide](#).) You also can contact your Risk Control consultant or email Ask-Risk-Control@travelers.com.



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