Welcome

Welcome to this IIRSM personal security supplement.

Many organisations require their employees to travel abroad on business. It is now essential that as part of their risk management strategy, employers equip their workforce with the capability to keep themselves safe when travelling. It is sensible to check your travel policies and update if necessary. Check insurance documentation and risk registers to make sure that you are taking all necessary steps to prepare employees if they find themselves in a hostile environment or threatening situation. Awareness and preparation are the key.

In this issue you will find practical guidance on preparing for travel, choosing accommodation, using unfamiliar modes of transport and how to prepare and protect yourself when moving around an unfamiliar city or landscape. The advice given is intended to be easy to digest and easy to remember.

Please share this information with your colleagues and friends and use it to enhance your personnel safety strategies.
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Preparing to travel and arriving at your destination

Selecting a Secure Hotel for Business

Many corporations have hotels abroad that are owned by local businessmen and staffed by local workers often managed by first class hoteliers. You usually can expect levels of safety and security that are consistent with western standards. If in doubt when travelling on business, ask the corporate travel agent for a list of recommended hotels and check with the Regional Security Officer at your relevant embassy for a list of hotels recommended by officials visiting the area.

Make your own reservations when practical and consistent with your itinerary or company policies. The fewer people that become involved in your travel arrangements, the better. If travelling abroad, especially in politically sensitive areas, consider making reservations using your employer’s street address, without identifying the company, or using your personal credit card. Again, the less known about your travel itinerary and whom you represent, the better.

If arriving after 6.00pm, ensure that reservations are guaranteed. Request information about parking arrangements. If anticipating renting a vehicle, be aware that credit card information has been compromised in the past. Always audit monthly credit card statements to ensure that unauthorised use has not been made on your account. It is advisable to join frequent travellers’ programmes available with many lodging companies. These programmes enable upgrades to executive or concierge floors where available. Be sure to advise the person taking reservations that you are a member and request an upgrade.

Do not linger or wander unnecessarily in the hotel car park, indoor garage, or public space around the hotel. Be alert for suspicious persons and behaviour. Watch for distractions that are intentionally staged to setup a pickpocket, luggage theft or purse snatch, such as anyone approaching you to ask for directions, asking for loose change, or buskers in unusual locations. Stay with your luggage until it is brought into the lobby, or placed into your taxi. If arrival or departure, it is advisable to remain in your taxi until the driver gets out to deal with your luggage.

Consider using the hotel porter. Luggage in the ‘care, custody and control’ of the hotel causes the hotel to be liable for your property. Keep luggage receipts - they are your evidence! Keep in mind though, that there are limits of liability created by states and countries to protect hoteliers. Personal travel documents, laptops, jewellery, other valuables and sensitive documents in excess of £1,000 in value should be hand carried and personally protected. If you arrive by car, park as close to a hotel entrance as possible and park in a well lit area. Remove all property from the car interior and place it in the boot. Avoid leaving any valuables or personal documents in the glove compartment. Prior to leaving the security of the vehicle, note any suspicious persons or behaviour. If using valet service, leave only the ignition key and take the house or office key away with you. Often, valets are not employees of the hotel and work for contract firms. Parking garages are difficult to secure. Avoid dimly lit garages that are not patrolled and do not have security telephones or intercoms. Female travellers should consider asking for an escort to their vehicles whether parked in the car park or garage.
Registration Procedures

In some countries, your passport may be temporarily held by the hotel for review by the police or other authorities. Obtain its return at the earliest possible opportunity. Be aware of persons in the hotel lobby who may have unusual interest in your arrival. If carrying your luggage, keep it within view or touch. One recommendation is to position luggage against your leg during registration but place a briefcase or purse on the desk or counter in front of you.

Ground floor rooms, which open to a pool area or beach with sliding glass doors and window access, are considered vulnerable. Depending on the situation, area and security coverage, exercise a higher level of security if assigned a ground floor room. It is suggested that female travellers request rooms that are away from any lift, landing and stairwells. This is to avoid being caught by surprise by persons exiting the lift with you or hiding in the stairwell. Always accept the assistance of a porter upon check-in. Allow the porter to open the room, turn lights on, and check the room to ensure it is vacant and ready for your stay.

Before dismissing the porter, always inspect the door locks, locks on sliding glass doors, optical viewer (peep-hole), privacy latch or chain, guest room safes, dead-bolt lock on interconnecting suite doors and telephone. If a discrepancy is found, request a change of room. Ask where the nearest fire stairwell and escape are located. Make a mental note which direction you must turn in and approximately how many steps there are to the closest fire escape. You should also count the doors and memorise how many there are before you reach the exit. In the event of a fire, there may be dense smoke and no light. Also, observe where the nearest house telephone is located in case of an emergency.

Determine if the telephone is configured in such a manner that anyone can dial a guest room directly, or whether the phone is connected to the switchboard. Most security conscious hotels require a caller to identify whom they are attempting to telephone rather than providing a room number. Note how hotel staff are uniformed and identified. Many ‘pretext’ crimes occur by persons misrepresenting themselves as hotel employees on house telephones to gain access to guest rooms. Avoid permitting a person into the guest room unless you have confirmed that the person is authorised to enter. This can be verified by using the optical viewer and by calling the hotel’s front desk.
In Your Hotel Room

All hotel rooms abroad are bugged for audio and visual surveillance. This statement, of course, is NOT TRUE, but, that is the premise under which you must operate to maintain an adequate level of security awareness while conducting business abroad. Many hotel rooms overseas are under surveillance. In countries where intelligence services are active - if you are working for an organisation of interest to the government or government-sponsored competitor - everything that you do in that hotel room may be recorded and analysed for possible vulnerabilities or for any useful information that can be derived from your room.

With the basic premise established above, here are some security tips that will minimise the potential risks. Many of these tips are just common sense but worth making a mental note of to ensure your continuing personal safety.

Hotel Room Key

Keep it with you always. The two most common ways that thieves and others use to determine if a person is in their hotel room is to look at the hotel room mail slot or key board or call the room on the house phone. If you do not answer the phone that is one thing but, if your room key is there, you are obviously out and the coast is clear for a thief or anyone else who is interested in searching your room and luggage.

Upon arrival

Invest in a good map of the city. Study the map and make a mental note of alternative routes to your hotel or local office should your map become lost or stolen. Identify prominent buildings near your accommodation so that you can orientate yourself. Be aware of your surroundings. Look up and down the street before exiting a building. Learn how to place a telephone call and how to use coin telephones. Make sure you always have extra coins for the telephone.

Mark significant points on a map such as your hotel, embassies and police stations.

Avoid jogging or walking in cities you are not familiar with. If you must jog, be aware of the traffic patterns when crossing public streets. Joggers have been seriously injured by failing to understand local traffic conditions.
Protecting your belongings

Valuables

Valuables should normally be left at home. The rule of thumb is, if you neither want nor can afford to lose them **DO NOT TAKE THEM!** However, if you must carry valuables, the best way to protect them is to secure them in your local business office. If that is not possible, the next best course of action is to seal any valuables by double-enveloping and initialling across the seams and taping all edges and seams before depositing them in the hotel’s safe deposit box or safe.

Luggage

Keep it locked whenever you are out of the room. It will not stop the professional thief or intelligence agent but it will keep the curious maid honest!

Passport

Keep your passport with you always. The only time to relinquish it is:

- To the hotel if required by law when registering
- If you are required to identify yourself to local authorities for any reason

Also:

- At night, lock your passport and your other valuables in your luggage
- Utilise a portable or improvised burglar alarm while asleep
- Two ashtrays and a water glass are quite effective as an alarm placed on the floor in front of the entry door into your room. Place a water glass in one ashtray and the second ashtray on top of the glass. If a straight chair is available, place it next to the door and put the ashtray/water glass alarm on the edge of the chair where it will fall with enough noise to wake you!
A Guest’s Room as a “Safe Haven”

Hotels are required to provide reasonable care to ensure that guests have a safe and secure stay but are not required to guarantee guest security.

You are responsible for your personal security and property. While in the room, keep the door closed and engage the dead-bolt and privacy latch or chain. A limited number of hotel emergency keys can override the dead-bolt locks. To ensure privacy, use the latch or chain! Hoteliers provide guest room safes for the convenience of the guests. However, these containers are not as durable as bank safes and can be breached. Furthermore, the Housekeepers Liability Laws state that if a guest’s property is not in the “care, custody and control of the hotel” the hotel is not liable. If you feel it suitable always place money or valuables in the safe deposit box at the front desk of the hotel.

When leaving your room, ensure that the door closes and is secured. Make a mental note of how your property was left and avoid leaving valuables in plain view or in an unorganised manner. Many hotel employees enter the room each day to clean, repair and restock the room. Although most hotel employees are honest and hard-working, a few succumb to the temptation of cash or jewellery left unprotected. If you determine that an item is missing, conduct a thorough search prior to reporting the incident to hotel security. Do not expect to receive a copy of the loss report, as it is an internal document. This incident should be reported to local police, the Regional Security and Consular Officers at your country’s Embassy or Consulate together with your insurance provider. Hotel security can provide a letter verifying that you reported property missing.

Prior to travelling, it is recommended that you copy all credit cards, passport, airline tickets and other documents to facilitate reporting loss and replacing them. While travelling, secure these documents in the room safe deposit box and carry copies of your passport and visa.

Request housekeeping make up your room while you are at breakfast, rather than leave a “Please Service This Room” sign on the door knob. This sign is a signal to criminals that the room is unoccupied.

If you are required to use parking stickers in your vehicle, be sure that it does not indicate your name or room number. Most first-class international hotels have spent a considerable sum to ensure your safety and security. Fire safety equipment, CCTVs and security patrols are often part of the hotel’s security plan. Regardless of the level of security provided by the hotel, you need to:

- Become familiar with certain aspects of the security profile of the hotel, CCTV etc
- Vary the time and route by which you leave and return to the hotel
- Be alert for persons watching your movements. Note if hotel security lock certain access points after dark. Plan to use the main entrance upon return to the hotel
- Speak with the porter, concierge and front desk regarding safe areas around the city in which to jog, dine or sightsee
- Ask about local customs and which taxi companies to use or avoid. Do not take valuables to the spa or gym
• Note if there are house phones available in the event of confrontation or emergency

• Be cautious when entering rest rooms in the hotel. On occasion, unauthorised persons use these facilities to deal drugs or engage in prostitution or theft

Female travellers should be alert to placing handbags on hangers on the inside of the lavatory doors, or on the floor in cubicles, two frequent locations for grab and run thefts.

Criminals often use areas around public telephones to stage pickpocket activity or theft. Keep briefcases and purses in view or “in touch” while using mobile or normal telephones.

Purse snatchers and briefcase thieves are known to work hotel bars and restaurants, waiting for unsuspecting guests to drape these items on chairs or under tables only to discover they are missing when departing. Keep items in view or “in touch”.

Be alert to scams involving an unknown person spilling a drink or food on your clothing. An accomplice may be preparing to steal your wallet, briefcase, purse or handbag.

The pool or beach area is fertile ground for thieves to take advantage of guests enjoying recreational facilities. Leave valuables in the hotel. Sign for food and beverages on your room bill, rather than carry cash. Prostitutes take advantage of travellers around the world through various ploys, use of so called “date-rape” drugs and theft from the victim's room. Avoid engaging with persons who you do not know and refrain from inviting them to your room.

With good planning and common sense a stay in a hotel for business or pleasure should become a safe and relaxing experience.
Exploring and travelling

Travelling by vehicle

If travelling by vehicle it is wise to take a few cautionary steps:

• Be alert, especially when leaving or entering your home/premises

• Vary your routes and times of journeys

• Travel with others where possible

• Report any suspicious vehicles or people

• If you think you are being followed; contact the police immediately and avoid becoming isolated

• Be suspicious of anyone trying to get you to stop or leave your vehicle. If possible, keep windows closed and doors locked

• When stopping; do not allow yourself to be boxed in, leave enough room to manoeuvre when parking. Do not leave anything in your vehicle that may identify you or your business

• Try to avoid parking anywhere that may become dark or isolated before your return

Walking

Exploring new places is one of the most enjoyable aspects of visiting a country. Whilst making the most of the opportunity for new experiences, you may become vulnerable. Keep safe by taking a few simple precautions:

• Cover up expensive jewellery and tuck any gold chains into your top or collar

• Try to avoid reading in the street, particularly a street map as it indicates you are not familiar with your surroundings. If you must do it, try to keep walking

• If someone asks you any question and you feel you should reply keep at least two arm lengths away

• Better still, try to answer on the move

• Regarding a request for the time – don’t stop!!

• Be firm with beggars – say NO! Keep moving. Do not make eye contact with any person who approaches you

• Remember, in most countries pickpockets operate in twos and threes – one will distract you, possibly begging and touching, the second will take your valuables and pass them to the third who will be off

• Be very aware of approaches from the rear when standing looking at tourist attractions
• Do not get involved with strangers in the street

• Pickpockets usually require you to be distracted and you may be jostled, engaged by another in conversation or otherwise distracted

• Do not let anyone touch you, however innocuous, as even a light touch with the ends of someone’s fingers has told them where you keep your wallet. Pickpockets are professional magicians and just like in a magic show, watches and wallets will disappear as if by magic

• Don’t speak about any private matters within earshot of stranger, particularly details of travel arrangements

• Whilst you need to avoid crowds you equally need to avoid desolated side streets, there is safety in numbers

• Walk tall, keep your feet slightly apart for good balance

• Keep your head up and your mind focused on your surroundings. Keep your hands out of your pocket

• Know where you are going and how to get there

• Look confident without appearing arrogant. Good posture, stamina, strength are all positive aids to good self-protection

• Walk down the middle of the pavement, holding any brief case or bag towards the buildings or railings

• Keep clear of alleyways, shrubbery and dark doorways

• If you are in an area with motorbikes pay particular attention to the road, especially if the motorbikes have pillion passengers

• Keep to busy, brightly lit areas where possible

• Avoid short cuts across waste ground, deserted parks and unlit alleys

• Be alert to your surroundings
Safety Whilst Driving and Driver Employment

If you have been busy all day, contending with difficult situations, you are probably not in the best frame of mind to drive a vehicle back to a location along a potentially hazardous route or through frustrating checkpoints. Local drivers take the strain off driving. If possible, make sure there are always two people in a vehicle when travelling with a local driver.

There are potentially several advantages to using a local driver:

- Familiarity with the conditions, terrain and routes
- Competence in a local language can help in negotiating passage through checkpoints
- Much time may be spent travelling and a local driver can help someone from outside the area to learn about local customs, history and culture
- An extra pair of eyes and ears

However, there are also potential drawbacks in employing local drivers. In civil conflicts a driver from particular ethnic background, nationality, religion, clan or political grouping, may be personally at risk and endanger passengers if he or she becomes embroiled in a dispute. A dispute might even be initiated because of the driver’s background or may arise because of some other incident, such as an accident involving another vehicle.

A driver speaking a ‘local’ language could be put at a disadvantage if it was the ‘wrong’ language or dialect, as far as regional disputes are concerned. It may also mean that not all the occupants of a vehicle can follow a vital conversation or negotiation.

Be careful in local demonstrations, it is not uncommon for drivers to leave you isolated in a car whilst joining the demonstration.

A local driver might be susceptible to pressure to supply information or act in a certain way. This is an issue common to all locally employed staff. Clearly, the decision to employ local drivers (or any staff) should be made in the context of local circumstances. There are pro’s and con’s to be considered.

Your Vehicle

- Visibility - consider using vehicles that are similar to those generally seen locally
- Check refuelling facilities and whether the correct type of fuel is available
- Check for availability of garages and repair facilities
- Consider the suitability of a two or four wheel drive vehicle based on quality of local roads
• Ensure that your vehicle is in good working order. Not every country has the same standards of vehicle conditions as your own country

• Check the petrol gauge before every trip and make sure the spare tyre is inflated and the jack is in place

• Check that you are carrying a torch, basic tool kit, first-aid kit and a gallon of water

**Approaching, entering and leaving a vehicle**

It is good practice to establish a cautious routine when approaching, entering and leaving a vehicle. It need not take long to conduct a few simple precautions:

When approaching a vehicle:

• Begin your visual assessment of the area from at least 50 feet away from the vehicle. This will give you a good range of vision for your approach. If you notice persons loitering around your vehicle, do not approach or associate yourself with the vehicle. If it is safe to approach, check the area around the vehicle, including up and down the street, for suspicious people or objects

• Check there is nothing in the tyre wells

• Check the tyres themselves for any sharp objects in the tyres or tracks

• Examine the exhaust pipe for obstructions

• Check under the vehicle

• Examine the car’s interior, especially the back seats and floors before getting in

**On entering the vehicle:**

• Lock the doors

• Adjust the mirrors, particularly side mirrors which may have been knocked whilst away

• Never lower the window more than three inches. This will prevent persons grabbing occupants or property

• Ensure everyone wears a seatbelt except in exceptional circumstances, such as the danger of attack when a quick exit of the vehicle may be necessary

• When switched on, check the instruments are working and they indicate satisfactory fuel, oil pressure, battery charging and water temperature (when warmed up)

**Upon arrival at a destination:**

• If feasible, circuit your arrival point (one full block) before coming to a halt

• Whilst doing so carry out a visual check of your immediate environment and pay particular attention to the general location where the car will come to its final stop
Ask yourself:

Is there anything suspicious or unusual, such as vehicles or pedestrians parked or standing, with no obvious reason for being there?

Are there any obstacles, such as a wall, trees or bushes, which could conceal a would-be attacker or thief?

Is anyone, including a police officer/security guard, approaching or gesturing towards you? Is there an obvious reason for their attention?

Is there a security guard at their post? If not, why not?

If you are the least bit suspicious or uncertain when pulling up to your own home or accommodation, do not pull over or stop at a gate. Do not slow down. Instead, turn the car around or drive past at the same rate of speed until you arrive at the nearest safe location. You can then make a telephone call to an appropriate person, spouse or household member, neighbour, security personnel, in order to check the situation.

Leaving the vehicle

- Carry out a 360 degree visual sweep of your environment and check your mirrors before turning off the engine and opening the door

- Never leave anything behind or stored in the boot that is of personal value or which may give away your identity, address or travel plans. This could include work, personal or vehicle registration documents

- If you have a driver, it may be best for them to carry these documents instead. This will depend on the nature of potential threats and local circumstances

- Documents may include vehicle registration, road tax, insurance, driver's licence, permission to travel/transit, and so on

- Avoid features such as interior lights that remain on for a few minutes after the driver has departed - they may attract the curious to examine the contents of your car

- Separate the ignition key from your other keys
Checkpoints and Navigation

Security forces and checkpoint personnel may stop a vehicle to question the driver and other occupants individually about where they are going and what they are doing. It is therefore important that you and other team members in the vehicle are briefed on your mission and intended schedule. They should be able to clearly explain and recount the same facts about your reason for travel, which should avoid confusion and defer suspicion.

It may be advisable for the agency or local authority to issue travelling staff with an official letter which describes the work of the company and authorises their travel.

Planning of routes is important. Try to take a paper copy of your journey (do not rely on your phone). Have an idea how long a journey should take e.g. from the airport to your hotel. Make allowances for traffic.

Download or buy a good map prior to travel, write details of key areas onto the map so that in difficult situations you can orientate yourself. GPS may not always work or be available in some areas.

Use of maps and key information about the area you are staying in is critical. Look for prominent features whilst travelling and mark them on the map e.g. cathedrals, churches, large buildings, statues etc.

Safety & Accident Procedures

Vehicle related accidents pose one of the greatest dangers in emergency programmes. Implement and follow safety guidelines to minimise the risks.

- Regulate vehicle speed according to road conditions
- Observe speed limits and warning signs
- Do not be afraid to tell your driver to slow down!
- Always stop at a distance that you can see the rear tyres of the car in front of you
- Do not drive whilst under the influence of drink or drugs
- Keep a reasonable distance from other vehicles and avoid ‘tailgating’
- Avoid driving in heavy rainstorms. Stop and wait for it to pass if possible
- Avoid night driving wherever possible
Driving at night is riskier than during the day. There are several reasons for this:

- Vision is impaired
- Animals may seek relatively warmer tarmac
- Other vehicles may be poorly equipped and have limited or no lights
- Vehicles may stop on the road without lights
- There is a possibility of more checkpoints at night
- The chance of heightened criminal, bandit or military activity

Every vehicle should carry a first aid kit and drivers should be trained to use it.

Follow the daily vehicle checks and check additional equipment in preparation for journeys.

Do not assume everything has been checked beforehand. It is worth the extra few minutes to double check with the driver.

Ensure sufficient quantities of fuel, drinking water and, possibly food, are included in case of delays.

Establish a procedure to follow when an accident occurs and ensure all occupants understand it.

If there is an accident a key decision is whether to stop and assist injured persons. There is no fixed rule and it very much depends on:

- How serious is the accident?
- How many people are around?
- Are you directly involved?
Try to assess the demeanour of the people who have gathered around the accident. Are they concerned for the welfare of the injured?

Do they appear to be an angry mob that may turn on you as someone responsible for what happened?

Beware that a person may appear ‘injured’ but that person may have been planted to cause a vehicle to stop for an ambush or robbery.

It may be advisable to keep going but report the incident to the local police or military when you are in a safe location. Inform your office or place of work about all relevant details of an accident:

- Location, date and time of day, weather conditions
- Names, addresses/contacts of those involved and witnesses
- Driver’s licence, vehicle registration and insurance details
- Description of the accident (draw a sketch)
- Record any injuries to people and animals, and damage to property
- Do not get involved in any instant settlement or accept blame. Record the facts and make a sketch if possible

We hope you have found the information in this brochure helpful.

Of course travelling abroad is a pleasure and also a commercial necessity in today’s global marketplace. And it is usually safe for us to do so. However, in a more unstable world we should all be aware of what can happen and how best to protect ourselves.

Don’t be afraid to travel – be prepared to travel.
About Cardinus

Since 1995 Cardinus has been delivering innovative safety and compliance risk management solutions to help our clients save money, lives and mitigate risk.

Cardinus work with many of the world’s largest organisations and have long standing clients based in the UK, US, EU and Asia. Whether the goal is to keep employees safe, meet regulatory compliance, reduce injuries and related costs, improve workplace productivity or improve current processes, Cardinus is dedicated to delivering successful outcomes.

Our global network of consultants provides clients with strategic advice and operational support and are industry experts with the experience to design and deliver comprehensive solutions that match client needs.

Cardinus are a specialist organisation, with whom their employees face a myriad of risks from cyber and political unrest to terrorism and kidnap and ransom. Alongside our company they work in close partnership with commercial, governmental and not-for-profit organisations to protect your assets both in the UK and abroad. Cardinus have formed and delivered many strategies on counter terrorism, lone working, risk avoidance and environment training and corporate risk policies and procedures.

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About IIRSM

IIRSM is the professional home for everyone involved in managing risk. Our members work across all sectors of industry, worldwide and they lead the way in managing risks to benefit people, society, government and business. IIRSM harnesses the expertise of its members to increase their status and influence.

IIRSM members are responsible for a range of business functions, including but not limited to: health and safety; environmental management; emergency planning and business continuity; occupational health; mental health and wellbeing; security; project management; and human resources. It welcomes individual and corporate members from all sectors of industry, including: construction; oil and gas; engineering; retail; public sector; transportation; manufacturing; facilities; hospitality and healthcare.

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