

5 factors to consider before sending your employee abroad

Travelling abroad is an important part of business life – so, why is there so little information about how to travel safely?

Meeting duty of care obligations when an employee travels abroad is much more than a box-ticking exercise – and it needs to start well before an assignment overseas. Business Grapevine spoke to a representative of CEGA, the global risk, assistance and claims specialists, who shared some pre-travel tips with employers.

1. Health

“Be prepared for every eventuality – and go well beyond pre-travel vaccinations,” they explained. “Just for a start, you need to think about the current health needs of your employees: for instance, do they rely on regular prescriptions or are they diabetic - and do accompanying family members suffer from any medical conditions?”

In this vein, it’s also a good idea to find out about the capabilities and limitations of local routine medical and dental care in the country they are heading to.

“Will it meet your employee’s needs or will you have to provide access to extra support?” they asked. “And you’ll need to know about the prevalence of contagious diseases, rabid dogs, poisonous stings and unsafe drinking water, as well as the suitability and accessibility of emergency care.”

2. Security

“Find out if the political situation is stable and if conflict or terrorism is likely to strike in the future – and remember that things can change quickly. Is it safe for your employee to walk around alone at night or during the day, or is kidnapping and mugging prevalent? Do they know how to avoid unwelcome attention and cultural clashes?”

“What about protecting themselves against credit card or mobile phone cloning or insecure Wi-Fi networks? It’s up to you to have the right processes in place to keep them safe and to make sure they know how to mitigate risk and react to security threats.”

3. Environment

“Get advice about the climate: is there a danger of excessive heat or cold? Are earthquakes, hurricanes or floods likely? Let your employees know the procedure if a natural disaster strikes. And educate them about heatstroke and other heat-related problems, or how best to cope in plunging temperatures.”

4. Emergency assistance

“How will you locate your employees if an emergency strikes? Could an evacuation be implemented quickly and what would it involve? How do you know that your emergency planning will work?”

“Will your staff know exactly what to do? A matter of minutes can turn a minor incident into a catastrophe - but planning ahead with real-life scenarios can help to avert this.”

5. Reassurance

“Make sure your employees feel supported and prepared, not just for their destinations but also for their journeys. Many employers forget that travel itself can be hazardous, especially if it involves crossing high-risk countries.

“Anticipate the risks before a deployment overseas and put in place the appropriate safeguards, training and procedures. You won’t just be meeting duty of care obligations; you’ll also be investing in a safe and productive workforce.”

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