

Staying safe

With humanitarian personnel working in increasingly insecure environments and attacks on aid workers rising at an alarming rate, knowing how best to protect yourself in an emergency situation has never been more important. (See 'Managing security' page)

The following advice covers some general issues you should consider and become knowledgeable of throughout your deployment. However, you need to know your context, and be aware of your organisation's security procedures.

TRAVEL

- Get a briefing on road/ security conditions
- Leave a confidential copy of your travel plan: - *routes to be travelled; timeframe; planned stops*
- Carry copy of passport, travel permits, ID card and emergency cash
- Take extra food, water, spares, paper
- Wearing seat belts at all times substantially reduces deaths and injuries in road traffic accidents
- Slow down. Insist drivers maintain safe but reasonable speeds
- Do NOT stop for accidents or carry armed passengers e.g. police, soldiers
- Know how to behave at checkpoints in your context before travel
- Regularly check in by radio or phone
- After each journey, debrief on the road and security conditions

HAZARDS

- In lodgings and offices, check door and window security, fire exits and any fire extinguishers, smoke detectors etc.
- Use local people's knowledge to assess the level of threat
- Assess need for protective clothing – gloves, masks, flak jacket, hard hat etc.
- Know location of secure areas and locations of team members
- Be aware of potential health issues for you and other team members
- Be aware of and alert to your surroundings, potential hazards and threats, and report them
- When out and about, be aware of personal security issues and avoid areas of potential danger e.g. *crowds, mined areas, factional border, riots, criminal activity areas, shelling*

COMMUNICATIONS

- Be familiar with your organisational security plan and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)
- Get a briefing from the person responsible for security in your team
- Learn to use all equipment before travel – phones, radio, trackers etc.
- Be aware of your organisation's communications plan/comms tree:
 - *reporting or call-in procedures*
 - *radio procedures and frequencies*
 - *contact and backup systems*
- Maintain a points-of-contact list (*internal and external*)
- Keep a hard copy of the contact list in case of phone theft or flat battery
- Keep copies of plans and procedures in a safe but accessible place
- Ensure everyone knows what to do at checkpoints and in event of accidents
- Share plans with others, if safe to do

EVACUATION

Know what you should do in case of an emergency:

- Be familiar with your organisation's emergency evacuation plans and updates:
 - *coordination with security focal points*
 - *shutdown procedures*
 - *assembly points*
 - *survival equipment and supplies*
 - *transportation for evacuation*
 - *evacuation points and routes (airport, border, specific road) marked on maps*
 - *vehicles prepared for evacuation*
- Rehearse evacuation plan as necessary
- Check medical emergency plans, and know medical service providers
- List personal items to take or leave in an emergency and know location



Think safety and security at all times!

Be prepared:

- Ensure you know the risks you will be undertaking and have given 'informed consent'
- take advantage of personal security and communications training before your assignment
- <https://www.redr.org.uk/Our-Work/Key-Projects/Mission-Ready-Online-Security-Training>
- <http://www.disasterready.org>
- brief yourself on the situation in the country or the part of the country in which you will be working

- ensure you fully understand your crisis response procedures and obtain a security briefing on your arrival
- identify specific threats
- keep updated
- avoid complacency

If you are not comfortable about an assignment or trip – don't do it

Additional resources on All In Diary website:

Personal Safety and Security Handbook © CARE International 2014.
Safety and security for national humanitarian workers © OCHA 2011
Staying alive, ICRC Handbook © ICRC, 2006

Web links for further information

General advice: <https://aidworkersecurity.org/>
<http://www.ngosafety.org>
<https://www.eisf.eu>