



Hostile Environment advice, tips and training for Journalists, Aid agency staff and Business travellers

Hostile Environment Risks

With our global community so much more accessible, international business opportunities more widely available, the 24 hr news cycle so much more demanding, and conflicts and natural disasters always requiring support and intervention, it is no wonder that more people than ever before are working, living or travelling within regions with significant potential dangers.

Many organisations have learnt from disastrous mistakes and now understand the risks much better, others are just more safety conscious and sensible with quality intelligence, risks management systems and quality Hostile Environment Awareness Training for all their staff deployed to hostile environments. Yet others still seem oblivious to the dangers with thousands of people kidnapped each year, hundreds killed by gunshot wounds, improvised explosive devices or mines, and thousands more subjected to terrible ordeals, crimes or frightening experiences causing trauma and often long term psychological impacts.

So if you are travelling somewhere with potential dangers on business, filming or covering a story in a hostile region, or working with an aid agency in a remote potentially dangerous location what advice should you consider and what actions can you take?

Ideally a specialist training program like our Hostile Environment Training HET or Hostile Environment Awareness Training HEAT which are normally five days is the best way to fully understand the risks and plan and prepare accordingly. Any program should be a good combination of classroom theory and field scenario based training so you actually become conditioned and can learn to apply your training to risk and crisis experiences.

If time does not allow for quality hostile environment training courses then depending upon the region of travel and the intelligence a shorter more specific kidnap prevention training course, hostage survival training, counter surveillance training, or crisis and incident management program may be appropriate.

At the very least a travel security intelligence briefing should form part of you pre deployment/travel preparation

Security Advice and Guidelines Hostile Environments

Kidnap Prevention, Militia attacks, Roadblocks, Crime, Natural Disasters, Climate

Below we have compiled a list of some crucial aspects of mitigating the above risks and preparing for such environments:

- ✓ Collate and examine all available intelligence and research the regions, security risks, natural disasters, climate, weather forecasts, culture, religions, traditions, political situation, crime, corruption, safe borders, and in country support.
- ✓ Examine carefully key risks, locations, evacuation routes, communications, roads and infrastructure
- ✓ Assess the risks with diligence and prepare a risk management plan and contingency plans
- ✓ Ensure you have validated permissions to travel, visas, permits, passports, tickets, insurance and specialist insurance as required.
- ✓ Understand medical conditions in the region, vaccinations and immunise and prepare appropriately

- ✓ Review necessary equipment, communication devices, protective clothing and all the general travel accessories and clothing that may assist you in country and plan, prepare and test all your equipment, kit and loads where possible
- ✓ Ensure you examine any special equipment needs, such as transit documents, permissions, protective and or secure cases, etc
- ✓ Carefully assess, vet and validate any transport, accommodation, fixers, drivers, security and support staff
- ✓ Prepare yourself and family psychologically and know what you will do and will not do in varying risk circumstances
- ✓ Ensure family, friends, employees know what to say and do if contacted by kidnappers or in the event of any other incident
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with languages, cultural and political issues and the regions relationships with its neighbours
- ✓ Always plan routes with great care and always undertake adequate route and regional map orientation. Know where you would escape to, local points of possible assistance, medical, police, military, border crossings, etc
- ✓ Make yourself aware of any border times, delays, paper work requirements, costs, etc
- ✓ Ensure you maintain a low profile where possible, consider clothing, equipment, luggage, jewellery, make up, etc
- ✓ Ensure clothing, luggage and especially footwear is durable and appropriate
- ✓ Plan carefully sleeping arrangements and security and have a tried and tested emergency sleeping set up, such as sleeping mat, sleeping bag, mosquito nets, security devices, etc
- ✓ Consider carefully access to safe drinking water and have a back up water filter system
- ✓ Have an adequate medical/emergency and survival kit and know how to use it all
- ✓ Have quality tested communication and navigation systems. Consider electrical charging, power supplies, solar chargers, leads, plugs, available networks, frequencies, etc
- ✓ Have emergency numbers on speed dials on communication devices and pre drafted SMS messages for emergencies
- ✓ Ensure family, employees, have itineraries and travel timings and emergency cut off times for contact
- ✓ Consider carefully the effects of climate extremes, dust, sand, smoke and moisture on yourself, clothing and equipment and plan accordingly
- ✓ Always have with you your Escape Pouch and an Escape Bag with the emergency essentials
- ✓ If you need protective clothing like ballistic vests and respirators then get specialist advice, correct ratings and sizes and wear them when the risk is present, always keeping them close by
- ✓ Ensure all your information security is adequate, electronic devices have passwords and encryptions and operate always on a 'need to know basis'. Ensure you have no documentation or data that could increase your risk
- ✓ If you need to carry documents consider using a separate USB encrypted and or the cloud
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with any rebel groups, gangs, militia, regional crimes and what to do at road blocks, etc
- ✓ Understand other risks like wildlife, insects, reptiles and climatic conditions or natural events
- ✓ Obey local laws and customs and monitor regional changes and intelligence actively to continually evolve your risk management strategies. Examine how you will get the latest intelligence or changes before you go
- ✓ Vary routes, clothing, routines on a regular basis and ensure you never wear or carry anything that could look military
- ✓ Be conscious of surveillance and apply good awareness at all times
- ✓ Do not take any unnecessary risks
- ✓ Know what to do and what not to do in a crisis, conflict, attack, roadblock, kidnapping, hostage, etc
- ✓ Never disclose to others any special training or insurance, or personal information like religion, background, etc
- ✓ Where possible seek specialist advice and support from people like the Cavell Group who can assist and advise on:

Hostile Environment Training	Travel Security Briefings	Incident Management
Kidnap Prevention	Intelligence	Kidnap Response
Remote Survival Training	Equipment advice	Kidnap Negotiations
Safety Security Training	Crisis Support	Kidnap Extractions
Hostage Survival Training	Contingency Planning	Protection
Specialist Security Training	Risk Assessments	and much more...