



SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

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1-SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus in early 2020, the way we are working, traveling or interacting with other companies and customers is changing. In addition to the difficulties posed by travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, this situation is affecting security environments, presenting new challenges for the departments responsible for risk management that are in charge of mitigating them, either in the national and international environment.

This crisis is causing an increase in socio-economic difficulties that are affecting directly in the companies due to the reduction of their means of production, resulting in layoffs and salary cuts, among others.

Although mandatory confinements in most countries are creating an increase in social destabilization due to their refusal, it is also leading to new business strategies at the structuring level, especially in the field of communication between clients and members of the same company. Although teleworking was already established in companies, especially in some countries, it has been a technique used during the pandemic that has reshaped or accelerated a trend that had been developing smoothly until now.

Likewise, governments have been involved in an unprecedented situation and the strategies they are implementing, as well as the management of risks, whether in the health or economic sphere or in any other, will pose a challenge that will determine how will emerge from the crisis and what measures to take in subsequent years to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

The impact of Covid-19-related measures is likely to accelerate established trends, such as deglobalization, automation, and sustainability, and reverse ongoing trends such as urbanization.

Although the corporations already have an existing policy in terms of travel risk management, different considerations can be made to take into account to ensure that this existing strategy is solid to face 2021.

A good planning, correct advice and assistance, as well as solid evaluation and communication by the companies will facilitate mitigating those risks that may arise in corporate travel, especially in those countries where there are greater risks.

The "duty of care" will have a role of special importance for companies due to their responsibility with their workers to try to mitigate risks.

The role of intelligence understood as a decision-making tool will be necessary to preparing reports with which detect the risks that may arise for the workers of a company. Uncertainty and changes make it necessary to carry out analysis to know what impacts and with what probability these risks may occur.

2- CONSIDERATIONS TO ENSURE A GOOD SAFETY POLICY DURING THE PANDEMIC

RISK OF COVID -19 AND "DUTY OF CARE"

The "duty of care" is a legal obligation for the companies to ensure the safety and health of its employees, protect and assist them either at the company's national headquarters or on business travels and, in case of expatriates, in their country of destination.

This "duty of care" extends itself to any circumstance, attacks, social unrest, natural disasters, armed incidents and pandemics, among others. Spain, as other countries, has strict and clear legislation of the duties of the employer regarding the safety of workers.

The obligation to ensure the safety and health of workers in Spain is an obligation that has been developed in both the Prevention of Labour Risks and the Criminal Code. Therefore, the employer must collect information that exceeds what is strictly labour to verify if specific measures should be adopted such as training, information, special insurance, consulting, advice and personal protection.

Travel Risk Management has been consolidated as a necessary tool to prevent, manage and provide the organization with management mechanisms for possible risks, as well as their integration in the process of lessons learned in a systematic and adaptive way.

Therefore, in this crisis situation, organizations, regardless of their size, have had to evaluate their ability to review their policies and strategies regarding the duty of care with their workers, especially during corporate travels. The need for a solid policy in this crisis is increased by the possible risks that may arise.

Employees will expect the minimum-security conditions have to be rigorously reviewed, bearing in mind that different scenarios and requirements may be presented for each specific country, making each trip or shipment of workers abroad to be examined individually.

Each country may present different entry and exit requirements with respect to Covid-19. The possibility of infection in a third country and treatment of the disease makes assessing the health infrastructure of the countries. The possibility of evacuation respecting the regulations of each country regarding the pandemic will be a challenge for companies when trying to mitigate all possible risks.

INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS PREPARATION DURING THE CRISIS

During the crisis, companies have focused on strategies to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. However, they still need to consider all the other potential risks to traveling personnel beyond the basic known trends.

Pre-travel analysis is imperative for any worker conducting business abroad. As discussed above, immigration protocols with respect to Covid-19 will be essential to know if there is a safe and reliable way to reach the destination.

Staying informed and analysing the contexts of the countries to which you travel is very important, especially to understand local geopolitics and regional security risks. Due to this situation, we can witness sudden changes in countries that force corporations to make decisions in a short period of time.

Analysing, monitoring and reviewing risks on a regular basis is an essential task to determine whether possible risks can materialize and may pose a risk to the company and to the traveller during their time in another country.

All countries, regardless of their risk level, must be thoroughly analyzed for a broad spectrum of risk factors. Today, risk and security situations are dynamic. Political and economic tensions can be high even in countries that are considered low risk.

Since the onset of the pandemic, social tensions in countries have increased. Even in low security risk countries, violent events have been witnessed. For example, since December 2020, demonstrations have been progressively taking place in the Netherlands against the Covid-19 restriction measures. Although it is a low-risk country, such protests have turned out to be violent and have been increasing, and the trend of social tension may continue to rise².

On a trip to the country, it is possible to witness marches of these characteristics in which disturbances cannot be foreseen, but can turn violent at any moment. These types of events must be anticipated in order to mitigate the risks that may arise. Knowing the country and its socio-political trends can help to assess the likelihood of such events occurring.

During the last few weeks, several violent incidents have been reported. On February 21, 2021, a vehicle was attacked in the Goma area of the Democratic Republic of Congo where the Italian ambassador and his escort were on their way to a local school in the village of Rutshuru, resulting in death. Although the perpetrator is still unknown, the Italian government has blamed the Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, the Hutu rebel group known as FDLR. However, the rebel group has denied responsibility for the attack³. In the absence of the necessary security investigations to clarify the facts and to see if there were security breaches, it is known from information published in various international media that the road was previously cleared for travel without close protection.

In this type of situation, the UN usually establishes a security convoy to prevent any type of attack and, in some cases, uses armored vehicles. Although this type of events may end up occurring even after a proper analysis of the situation in

² Reference to demonstrations in the Netherlands: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-55806454>

³ Reference to the event against the Italian ambassador in DR Congo: https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-56161916?xtor=AL-73-%5Bpartner%5D-%5Bbbc.news.twitter%5D-%5Bheadline%5D-%5Bmundo%5D-%5Bbizdev%5D-%5Bisapi%5D&at_custom4=294AF084-7541-11EB-A790-DF874D484DA4&at_medium=custom7&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_custom3=BBC+World&at_custom2=twitter&at_campaign=64

the area, it highlights the need for thorough prior planning by security officers to know the risks that could occur, assessing whether the trip or travel can be carried out under minimum security conditions. In some cases, being on site and lowering the alert can be fatal considering that in this case it is an area of high presence and activity of armed groups. It is estimated that more than 120 rebel groups are active in eastern DRC⁴. Therefore, any pre-displacement analysis to assess security factors and impact is of utmost necessity.

On February 20, two Dominican filmmakers were kidnapped along with a Haitian interpreter in the town of Grand Ravine, an area under the influence of armed gangs, where a police station had been robbed and looted the previous week by several gangs in the area. The victims were traveling around 22pm local time after shooting in Jacmel and the assaulted vehicle was escorted by police cars⁵. This event highlights the high security risk of traveling in isolated areas during nighttime hours with a high level of activity and presence of organized crime members. It is worth noting the increase in insecurity in Haiti, especially due to the situation of socio-economic instability. In January, human rights organizations registered at least 60 kidnappings in the country, triple the number reported in the same month of 2020.

3-SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

IDENTIFICATION

At any start prior to any trip, risks should be detected or identified and defined in detail and in a structured format.

Ensure that staff are informed of the risks that may occur, especially by providing information on destination countries with itinerary and profile advice.

Employees need to be informed of the security policies and, considering the crisis period we are going through, the doctors in your organization, as well as trained in their responsibility with regard to incident response and crisis management procedures.

ASSESMENT OR ANALYSIS

It is a fundamental part of safety and health management in the company that helps the company to control risks in the workplace either nationally or internationally. Risk assessment is a process that estimates the magnitude of risks in order to provide the employer and his workers with the necessary information to decide on the need to take appropriate measures to ensure safety.

⁴ Reference to the investigation in DR Congo against the Italian ambassador: <https://africa.cgtn.com/2021/02/23/dr-congo-italy-dispatch-investigators-into-ambassadors-death/>

⁵ Reference to the two Dominican citizens kidnapped in Haiti: <https://www.diariolibre.com/actualidad/dominicanos-eran-escoitados-por-la-policia-al-momento-de-ser-secuestrados-en-haiti-1H24549625>

In order to carry out this assessment, it is necessary to determine the possible risks and their impact on the workers in order to determine the magnitude of the risks and the need to control them in order to try to avoid them.

Risks must be evaluated in terms of the probability and impact of their occurrence.

Regarding the pandemic, the possibility that more restrictive measures may be reinstated at the destination and at the place of origin in the event of a sudden increase in infections, assess the possibility of avoiding or undertaking the trip by thoroughly assessing the requirements of each country.

IMPACT MITIGATION MEASURES OR TREATMENT

Once the risk has been assessed and evaluated, the necessary measures to reduce the assessed risk must be implemented. Normally the objective is to reduce the risk, but there are cases where this is not possible and the risk is accepted. Sometimes, as in the case of Covid-19, the possibility of living with the risk and trying to minimize its impact is established.

FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING

A process of continuous review is essential for risk management, re-evaluating risks and monitoring the status of treatments and controls implemented.

Once the company is on site, daily or weekly monitoring can be carried out, or as often as the company deems necessary. It is a tool that helps the company to keep up to date with the risks that may affect it, as well as their impact in case they materialize.

This also helps the company to establish the best strategy and apply the best security measures to protect its facilities and employees. In this way, it is possible to know whether the security context of a country or a specific area is worsening or, on the contrary, improving.

During Covid-19, country restrictions may change, as well as the impact of the virus, so monitoring each country's legislation and its measures to combat the virus can help the company to implement the relevant measures and even if it is considering abandoning the company's activity in the country of destination and returning its working staff.

COMUNICACION

Communication is a fundamental part of an effective risk management decision-making process. Access to reliable, evaluated and timely information to effectively inform employees and facilitate decision making is of vital

importance. The information must be contrasted and verified in an attempt to avoid erroneous or false information. In the case of Covid-19, there is a multitude of unverified or erroneous information both in the

In the case of Covid-19 there is a multitude of unverified or erroneous information both in the conventional media and on various social media platforms, so the use of official and international sources is more appropriate to obtain truthful information.

In the event of an increase in the infected rate, identify the locations of employees, communicate with them effectively and help them access medical assistance, means of evacuation or appropriate security. Having a pre-established communications plan with a monitored emergency response helps to avoid that in times of imminent risk, corporate communication means such as e-mails or telephones may fail.



Source: Decysyon