

## COMMERCIAL FEATURE

# PREPARE AND PREVENT: KEY TO EFFECTIVE RISK MITIGATION

*As more organisations are sending staff abroad in an increasingly uncertain and unpredictable world, the power of prevention is getting its time in the spotlight, says International SOS*

Whether it's to explore new markets, access new suppliers or develop new business relationships, organisations are increasingly taking a global perspective, as more and more workers from all sectors are finding themselves on overseas assignments.

With global mobility levels predicted to grow 50 percent by 2020<sup>1</sup>, there will be more workers facing unfamiliar environments – and uncertainty raises risks.

"In order to make the most of the increasing opportunities around the globe while reducing their risk exposure, organisations are focusing on risk prevention strategies," says Franck Baron, Group general manager, risk management at International SOS, the world's leading medical and travel security risk services company. "It makes more sense, they're realising, to head off a problem than try to mitigate the damage once it has occurred."

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Pre-travel health check programmes reduce the number of failed assignments: \$1 invested in prevention programmes returns a benefit ranging from \$1.6 to \$2.53<sup>3</sup>

Prevention strategies clearly produce a significant return on investment. According to a study published this year by Prevent, a research and consultancy firm, the average investment in an international assignment is \$311,000 a year, while the cost of a failed assignment ranges between \$570,000 and \$950,000.

The study demonstrates how an organisation's successful implementation of a pre-travel health check programme aimed at identifying pre-existing medical issues before assigning employees to a foreign country reduced the number of failed assignments due to poor health, producing up to 2.5 times' cost-savings.

"Effective prevention requires intelligence, thought and planning, as well as education," says Laurent Fourier, director of the International SOS Foundation, a think-tank

dedicated to improving the safety, security, health and welfare of people working abroad. "Organisations should understand the risks to their workforce and implement education programmes to mitigate risk and prevent incidents."

A case in point is that road accidents are one of the top five causes of medical evacuations led by International SOS. To mitigate this risk to business travellers, International SOS and Control Risks\* developed *Travel Risk: Road Safety*, an e-learning programme with best practices from their combined expertise and that of the Global Road Safety Partnership.

This emphasis on prevention means International SOS is regarded by its clients as a business enabler. "Corporate clients, governments and non-governmental organisations can further their business interests, while mitigating the risks to their workers through our information and assistance services. Productivity increases when organisations proactively mitigate risks and cultivate a 'duty of care' culture. Workers can focus on their core business mission with the confidence their organisation is developing and deploying appropriate travel risk management approaches to protect people from possible harm," says Mr Baron.

Knowledge is key to implementing meaningful prevention strategies. "Our deep knowledge of local environments, cultures, health systems, endemic risks, security threats and local infrastructure allows us to develop an accurate picture of the risks at any given destination," says Rob Walker, head of travel security intelligence, International SOS and Control Risks. "Rather than rely on information from a single source, we use a network of security and medical experts, both in-house and with external credentials, to provide real-time information that keeps travellers informed and supported."

In order to ensure that this information is accurate and reliable it's important to have a process of checks and balances to test the credibility of the sources. "Our personnel and our network of providers around the world give us the unique ability to source additional information or assess unconfirmed reports as necessary to further our prevention agenda," says Mr Walker.

As leaders in technological innovation, International SOS and Control Risks have created programmes, such as TravelReady, which automates compliance with an organisation's travel security and medical policies; and TravelTracker, the industry's leading

## PRE-TRAVEL HEALTH CHECKS & MALARIA PREVENTION PROGRAMMES BENEFIT BUSINESSES & EMPLOYEES



The number of mobile employees is expected to grow

**50% BY 2020<sup>1</sup>**



Annual investment in an international assignment averages

**\$311,000<sup>3</sup>**



Investing in pre-travel health programmes delivers savings of up to

**2.5x<sup>3</sup>**



### NO PRE-TRAVEL HEALTH CHECK

Assignment is not complete. Cost \$\$\$  
Cost of failed assignment ranges between \$570,000 to \$950,000



### PRE-TRAVEL HEALTH CHECK

Successful assignment. Cost \$  
Pre-travel health check programmes reduce the occurrence of failed assignments

Source:

1. [www.pwc.com/talentmobility2020](http://www.pwc.com/talentmobility2020)

2. [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-Global\\_Mobility\\_Effectiveness\\_Survey\\_2013/\\$FILE/EY-Global-Mobility-Survey.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-Global_Mobility_Effectiveness_Survey_2013/$FILE/EY-Global-Mobility-Survey.pdf)

3. [internationalsos.com/return-on-prevention](http://internationalsos.com/return-on-prevention)

Staff who feel vulnerable during their travels are less productive. This is an important message to risk managers, as only 30 percent of companies have a system in place for tracking business travellers<sup>2</sup>.

Organisations must have a proven system to contact workers abroad in cases something happens that could affect their safety.

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It's not always possible to prevent every problem and organisations must have a solid plan for responding when incidents occur

traveller tracking service. In addition to helping organisations locate their workers, TravelTracker e-mails travellers with information on their destinations before and during their trips to keep travellers informed of potential safety risks and how to mitigate those risks.

Organisations with workers going to high-risk or especially remote locations may require additional levels of risk mitigation. Active monitoring solutions allow organisations to define high-risk areas and safe zones, and then notify them when, and if, workers enter those areas. Travellers are also notified if they are entering a high-risk location so they are aware of the dangers.

It's not always possible to prevent every problem, however, and organisations must have a solid plan for responding when incidents occur.

"Sometimes travel to high-risk areas is required and timing is crucial when responding to an event. Active monitoring solutions provide organisations confirmation of the safe arrival of an employee and timely information to enact a response if that individual is not at the

location expected," says Mr Walker. "In addition to speed of response, travel safety advice must be easy to act on, and should come from experts with detailed regional and local knowledge.

"Our goal is always to reduce risks to an organisation and their workers. However, when an event does occur and assistance is needed, a global assistance network to support clients is essential."

Today, this network, alongside a policy of preparation and prevention, is increasingly vital for organisations sending their staff abroad.

**International SOS is the world's leading medical and travel security risk services company, caring for clients across the globe from more than 850 locations in 92 countries.**

\*International SOS and Control Risks combine the expertise and resources of both companies to provide a comprehensive suite of travel security risk services for mobile workers.

**www.internationalsos.com**