



CONSIDERATIONS FOR COVID-19 RISK MANAGEMENT

As many people reading this will know all too well, there's a lot of information buzzing around about COVID-19 right now within the NGO, as well as larger business, community. Without unnecessarily adding to the volume of information, here are three areas that organizations should consider as they manage the risks associated with COVID-19:

1. Promoting good personal health measures to mitigate risk of COVID-19 spread. These include the widely circulated guidance around hand washing, staying home if sick, covering sneezes/cough, etc. A good source of this guidance is the [Center for Disease Control's COVID-19 website](#). Organizations should ensure hand sanitizer, soap and disinfectant wipes are available in offices to promote these healthy habits and double down on the "stay home if you're sick" guidance (even waiving the need for Doctor's notes, etc.).

2. Reviewing and evaluating travel. Uncertainty is a driving force in COVID-19 travel risk management. Organizations are adjusting travel to reduce two key risks:

- Health and medical challenges, including direct exposure to COVID-19, but also limits on medical care in some locations that are hit by the outbreak.
- Travel disruptions, including the inability to leave a location, denial of entry at an interchange point or final destination along with potential quarantine upon return to home/destination. These disruptions could pose significant delays for travelers and leave them stuck in a location where an outbreak has suddenly developed.

Given the rapid pace with which this outbreak is developing, it's essential to monitor the global spread and associated travel disruptions. The [CDC COVID-19 travel information page](#), as well as information from medical assistance providers, such as [International SOS](#) (which has opened part of their portal to the public) are good resources. Other travel medical assistance companies are providing guidance to clients through portals, email updates and webinars. And, clients should contact assistance providers through 24/7 assistance centers for more tailored guidance.

Specific steps organizations are taking include:

- Restricting travel to countries/locations with active community transmission; some orgs are ceasing all travel while others allow "essential" travel with senior level approval
- Educating travelers about mitigation measures
- Reviewing procedures for accessing medical care while traveling, emphasizing role of medical assistance providers to identify appropriate facilities and monitor care
- Communicating risks, including health/medical and travel disruption along with limitations on ability to evacuate those ill with COVID-19 due to government restrictions on travel (exit and entry). Flexibility in allowing staff to defer travel to mitigate risks is important.
- Encouraging those with underlying health conditions to seek professional medical guidance before travel



3. Assessing business continuity needs in the event of a community outbreak near offices. Organizations should review how they would operate – and at what levels – if a localized community outbreak impacts them through: absences due to illness, inability to go into an office, cancellation of significant activities (meetings, conferences), etc. Many organizations (especially NGOs) have a general ability to shift to a work from home posture. But, it’s important to review key administrative or financial functions to ensure they can be done remotely (wire transfers, payroll, etc.) and that back-up approval authority is in place. The [CDC’s Interim Guidance for Businesses](#) includes some good information about contingency planning and FEMA has some guidance about [pandemic business continuity planning](#).

COVID-19 RELATED RESOURCES

[View a comprehensive list of COVID-19 related resources by The Overseas Security Advisory Council here.](#)

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