

21 January 2014

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International SOS Foundation launches first of its kind global framework on safety, health and security for international travellers

Bangkok--21 Jan--International SOS Services

Less than one-third of organisations conduct person/location risk assessments prior to expatriate assignments. The framework helps companies bridge this gap

Business responsibility must be extended to include all overseas workers and go beyond insurance

The International SOS Foundation, together with over 13 leading international health, safety and security experts, today launched the world's first global framework to protect workers travelling or on overseas assignments.

The document provides strategic guidance for organisations to identify hazards and threats and manage risks to ensure the safety, health and security of its workers.

Laurent Fourier, Director, International SOS Foundation said, "This is the first ever international framework and the timing is crucial as international business travel is growing faster than ever before. A recent PWC report found that a 50% growth in mobile workers is expected by 2020.

As businesses are shifting towards emerging and riskier markets and sending more workers, and their dependents, abroad - they need to make sure they are responsible and ensure the health and safety of those employees".

Bridging the gap in occupational health

Most instruments available to help protect workers' safety and health are focused on domestic issues. Furthermore, only two countries, Australia and Canada, have standards and legislation which extend the provisions of occupational safety and health laws to workers outside their home country.

The report was compiled by Dr David Gold, Senior Consultant to the International SOS Foundation: "While many organisations have occupational health practices in place for domestic employees, only 32% of the 628 organisations we surveyed conduct person/location risk assessments prior to expatriate assignments. This is very low when you consider that conducting a pre-assignment risk assessment is probably the most important step in any overseas occupational health policy.

Clearly many businesses have a gap which needs to be bridged if they want to meet their responsibilities to their workers. This framework provides practical measures that they can implement to protect those working or travelling abroad”, said Dr Gold.

Extending beyond just employees and insurance

Janet Asherson from the International Organisation of Employers said, “Often when we talk about business responsibility, we are thinking about directly-employed workers. However in the modern globalised world organisations must look beyond this. Instead companies need to look at the whole umbrella of business travellers including volunteers, students, trainees, dependents and sub-contractors.

Organisations need to remember that insurance is no longer enough when it comes to ensuring the health and safety of these travellers. Prevention is better than cure and organisations need comprehensive policies focusing on international travel to ensure they are living up to their responsibilities.”

About the International SOS Foundation

Established in 2011, the International SOS Foundation ?

www.internationalsosfoundation.org – has the goal of improving the safety, security, health and welfare of people working abroad or on remote assignments through the study, understanding and mitigation of potential risks. The escalation of globalization has enabled more individuals to work across borders and in unfamiliar environments; exposure to risks which can impact personal health, security and safety increases along with travel. The foundation is a registered charity and was started with a grant from International SOS. It is a fully independent, non-profit organization. The Foundation is currently in the process of setting up an experienced, independent governing Board of Trustees to steer its vision, objectives and future results.