

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Each Country Office should conduct a comprehensive security assessment and develop and implement a security strategy and general safety and security policies and procedures. However, every CARE staff member must view safety and security as an individual responsibility and not depend solely on the Country Office's procedures. A staff member will gain a greater sense of security and self-confidence by preparing ahead for a potential incident.

This chapter provides general safety and security guidelines that individual CARE staff members can use. Most of them are common sense measures that are frequently forgotten when in an unfamiliar environment or during crisis. Successfully employing the safety and security measures in this chapter requires resourcefulness and vigilance. It is hoped that by applying these measures within a framework of the Country Office security strategy, CARE staff can prevent safety and security incidents from ever occurring. When they do occur, the well-prepared staff member can take quick and decisive action to minimize the likelihood of injury or damage. This chapter provides information on:

- Situational Awareness**
- Building Community Relations**
- General Security Guidelines**
- Criminal Activity**
- Traveling**
- Walking**
- Public Transportation**
- Vehicle Safety and Security**
- Additional Considerations for Women**
- Family Members**
- Fire and Electrical Safety**
- Office and Residences**

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

4.1 SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Developing situational awareness by examining surroundings and potential threats is the first step in reducing the likelihood of a safety or security incident. Because each region poses its own unique threats, it is important to look at each region and culture with openness and discernment.

Situational awareness in its simplest form means paying attention to your surroundings and being sensitive to changes in them. It begins with an understanding of the culture and history of the area and is reinforced by frequent interaction with the local people. A Country Office can help incoming staff develop situational awareness by compiling cultural guidelines into a single document for use during staff orientation. It should include information on the country, the region, and the specific communities in the operational area, as well as the following:

- The identity of the various groups within the population and possible hostile or vulnerable groups.
- The sensitivities, policies, and capabilities of the host government.
- The relationship between local authorities and various interest groups, and the effectiveness of local government and civil infrastructure, such as police, fire and emergency response.
- Areas of criminal activity or instability.
- Situations that may lead to tension and confrontations among different factions.

4.2 BUILDING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Experienced field workers understand the value of protection provided through building positive rapport and good relations with the local population. Such positive acceptance can help reduce vulnerability, creating a buffer of neighbors committed to the safety of staff in the event of a crisis. Steps to building positive community relations include:

- Do not be aloof or isolated. Interact often with neighbors and other staff.
- Consider frequenting the local social gathering places, cafes, and parks. Families should be included as appropriate.
- Arrange an introduction to the local authorities as appropriate and build rapport with them.
- Become involved in community activities apart from work.

- If not from the area, learn the local language and practice it often. At a minimum, be aware of words or phrases that could be offensive.
- Avoid political discussions.
- Avoid being drawn into relationships that might carry personal obligations or expectations.
- Understand local religious and cultural beliefs and practices and the various issues that may arise from them.

"HARD TARGETS"

Aid workers are accustomed to feeling accepted and may have difficulty acknowledging that they are under threat. They may be reluctant to adopt or adhere to necessary security procedures, leaving them vulnerable to security incidents. The intent of an effective safety and security program is to make workers and assets less attractive targets – hard targets – forcing the criminal or potential attacker to look elsewhere. Aid workers do not have to hide inside fenced compounds to be considered hard targets. Often adopting simple security measures can deter a potential perpetrator. Some characteristics of a hard target include:

- **Inaccessible.** *Staff and assets are difficult to get to. The staff member rarely travels alone and assets are out of sight, secure, or well-protected.*
- **Unpredictable.** *Staff members vary their routine, using different routes and times for daily activities without any apparent pattern.*
- **Aware.** *Alert to surroundings, each staff member constantly maintains situational awareness and adheres to recommended security procedures.*
- **Safe habits.** *Everyone in the Country Office supports and maintains all safety and security policies and procedures.*

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

4.3 GENERAL SECURITY GUIDELINES

- Take time to plan activities. Try to know the exact route before traveling.
- Dress and behave appropriately, giving consideration to local customs.
- Learn a few words or phrases in the local language to deter an offender or call for help, such as “police” or “fire.”
- At a new assignment, find out about local customs and behavior and potential threats or areas to avoid.
- Know the local security arrangements, such as the nearest police station, emergency contact procedures, and potential safe areas.
- Maintain a calm, mature approach to all situations.
- Be non-provocative when confronted with hostility or potentially hostile situations.
- Be alert to the possibility of confrontation with individuals or groups. Be aware of times when crowds can be expected, such as after religious services or sporting events.
- All international staff, family members, and visitors should register with their embassy or consulate. They should know the telephone numbers, contact personnel, location and emergency procedures for their embassy.

4.4 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

In recent years, criminal activity has become a significant threat to the safety of aid workers. Criminal activity can take many forms, including armed assault, hijackings, or robbery. Be aware of the extent and activities of organized crime and take necessary precautions (for detailed information on dealing with specific incidents, see Chapter Five – Safety and Security Incidents). General precautions against criminal activity include:

- Avoid tourist areas that are often favorite places for criminal activity.
- Do not display jewelry, cash, keys, or other valuables in public.
- Pickpockets often work in pairs using distraction as their basic ploy. Be aware of jostling in crowded areas.
- When carrying a backpack or purse, keep it close to the body. Do not carry valuables in these bags; instead, leave them in a secure place.
- It is better to carry only a small amount of money and a cheap watch to hand over if threatened. Divide money and credit cards between two or three pockets or bags.

4.5 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR TRAVELING

- Use hardcase, lockable luggage and label it so the name and address are not easily seen.
- When traveling, leave a planned itinerary with a responsible person.
- Carry a list of emergency names, addresses, phone numbers, and the names of reputable hotels along the route.
- When appropriate, photocopy passport and other documents and carry only the copy, keeping a second copy at home or office. When carrying the original, consider disguising it with a plain slip-on cover.
- Country Offices should provide photo identification cards for all staff and emergency contact cards for visitors. They can be laminated, two-sided cards with English or another UN standard language on one side and the local official language on the reverse.
- Carry a phone card or local coins to make emergency phone calls if required.
- In public areas or on local transport, sit near other people and hold all belongings.
- Use caution when taking taxis in areas where cab drivers are known to be involved in criminal activity. When available, take licensed taxis and always settle on the fare BEFORE beginning the trip. Have the destination address written out in the local language to show the driver if necessary.

HOTELS

- *Be sure the hotel is approved by the Country Office. If possible, contact the appropriate embassy for security and evacuation information for that location.*
- *Take note if people are loitering in front of the hotel or in the lobby. Avoid hotels frequented by criminals.*
- *Ask for a room between the second and seventh floors, avoiding the top floor. This minimizes unwanted access from outside the building yet is within reach of most fire-fighting equipment.*
- *Be alert to the possibility of being followed to the room.*
- *Advise colleagues of hotel location and room number.*
- *Note the evacuation route in case of fire or emergency. Keep a flashlight by the bed to aid emergency evacuation.*
- *Always secure doors when inside the room, using locks and security chains.*
- *Examine the room, including cupboards, bathrooms, beds, and window areas for anything that appears suspicious.*

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

- *If the room has a telephone, check to be sure it is working properly.*
- *Keep room curtains closed during hours of darkness.*
- *Do not open the door to visitors (including hotel staff) unless positively identified. Use the door peephole or call the front desk for verification.*
- *When not in the room, consider leaving the light and TV or radio on.*
- *If available, use the hotel's safe deposit boxes for the storage of cash, traveler's checks, and any other valuables. Do not leave valuables or sensitive documents in the room.*

4.6 WALKING

In most settings it is possible to walk safely to and from work or on errands. Walking can help increase exposure to the community and build acceptance, dispelling the image of the privileged aid worker taking a vehicle everywhere. When the situation permits walking, staff members can help increase their safety with these precautions.

- Seek reliable advice on areas considered safe for walking. Consult a local street map before leaving and bring it along.
- Be aware of surroundings. Avoid groups of people loitering on the streets.
- If possible, walk with companions.
- Avoid walking too close to bushes, dark doorways, and other places of concealment.
- Use well-traveled and lighted routes.
- Maintain a low profile and avoid disputes or commotion in the streets.
- Never hitchhike or accept a ride from strangers.
- If a driver pulls alongside to ask for directions, do not approach the vehicle. A common criminal technique is to ask a potential victim to come closer to look at a map.
- Carry all belongings in a secure manner to prevent snatch-and-run theft.
- If someone suspicious is noted, cross the street or change directions away from them. If necessary, cross back and forth several times. If the person is following or becomes a threat, use whatever means necessary to attract attention of others. Remember, it is better to suffer embarrassment from being overcautious than to be a victim of crime.

4.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- *Avoid traveling alone.*
- *Have the proper token or change ready when approaching the ticket booth or machine.*
- *During off-peak hours, wait for the train or bus in a well-lit, designated area.*
- *In areas where crime is common on public transport, especially at night, consider using a taxi instead. In some areas, taxi use may also be dangerous but can be safer than waiting for public transport.*
- *Be mindful of pickpockets and thieves when waiting for transportation.*
- *If bus travel at night is unavoidable, sit near the driver. Avoid riding on deserted trains or buses.*
- *If train travel at night is unavoidable, select a middle car that is not deserted and try to sit by a window. This provides a quick exit in the event of an accident. Alternatively, select a lockable compartment if available.*
- *Leave any public transport that feels uncomfortable or threatening. After getting off any public transport, check to be sure no one is following.*

4.8 VEHICLE SAFETY AND SECURITY

Traffic and vehicle-related accidents are the major cause of injuries and fatalities among aid personnel. Driving in unfamiliar and sometimes difficult conditions, or where traffic laws are different from what staff members are used to, can increase the likelihood of an accident. If available and practical, all staff members should receive driver safety training.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- It is CARE policy for all staff members to wear seat belts at all times, in the front and rear of the vehicle.
- Do not speed or drive too fast for conditions. Observe local driving laws and regulations.
- Take extra precautions when driving through rural villages or on undeveloped roads with pedestrians on the roadway.
- Avoid night driving or driving alone.
- Avoid letting the fuel tank fall below half full.
- Keep a spare vehicle key in the office. Keep vehicle and residence keys on separate key chains to reduce additional losses during a carjacking.
- Never voluntarily carry unauthorized passengers, especially soldiers.

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

However, if threatened, provide the transportation.

- Keep doors locked. Open windows no more than 5 cm and only those windows near occupied seats.
- Know where the vehicle safety and communication equipment is and how to use it. Know how to perform basic vehicle maintenance (changing a flat, checking and adding fluids, etc.)
- **Motorcycle drivers and riders should wear helmets at all times.** While it is perhaps not local law, Country Offices should encourage this safety guideline and examine insurance policies for International staff to determine if it is a requirement for coverage.
- In remote areas or where threats may be present along the route, select primary and alternate routes. Avoid developing patterns.
- Avoid areas with criminal activity or known threats. If possible avoid “choke points” such as narrow alleys.
- When possible, consult with other agencies and organizations to monitor route conditions and change routes as necessary.
- If approaching a suspicious area, stop well before the area and observe other traffic passing through it. This is especially useful for “unofficial” or unexpected checkpoints or police roadblocks.
- Notify others of travel times, destination, and steps to take if late.
- Vehicles should be well maintained and checked daily. Safety discrepancies should be corrected before any journey. Make a maintenance checklist and keep a copy of the checklist and maintenance schedule with each vehicle.
- Do not travel without appropriate safety and communication equipment, such as HF or VHF radio, first-aid kit, maps, compass, etc.
- Have travel documentation in order, including vehicle registration, inspections, and passes as required. All drivers should have an international driver’s license or a valid license for the host country.
- Avoid transporting sensitive documents or equipment in areas prone to banditry. Arrange proper permits for transporting items that could be interpreted as useful to combatants or terrorists.
- Mark official vehicles appropriately for the area. In most cases it is advantageous to have CARE placards or flags clearly visible.
- Consider posting a decal on your door or window indicating guns are not permitted in the vehicle.

CONVOY SAFETY

Traveling by convoy in two or more vehicles is often the safest way to travel in areas of conflict or high crime. Having more than one vehicle can deter attack or provide assistance during breakdown. It may be possible to coordinate travel with other aid organizations in the area to create convoys or accompany security force convoys already scheduled. Each Country Office should examine transportation security procedures to determine if convoy travel is recommended. In addition to the basic guidelines for transportation safety listed elsewhere, convoy travelers are advised to consider the following:

- *Identify a leader for each vehicle as well as an overall team leader to follow regarding all safety issues.*
- *Use a pre-planned intended route, have an alternative route, and ask local authorities about the feasibility of those routes. Ensure availability of accommodations along the route in the event of delay.*
- *Leave behind a description of the intended and alternate routes and expected arrival times.*
- *Maintain communication between vehicles, ideally via radio, particularly between the lead and rear vehicles. Agree on manual signals in the event of radio failure.*
- *Do not transmit the names of destination and convoy routes when communicating by radio; use code words.*
- *Maintain an agreed-upon convoy speed.*
- *When necessary, notify local authorities of movements to alleviate suspicion.*
- *Follow in the tracks of the vehicle ahead while maintaining a distance of two to three car lengths. The vehicle behind should always be in view.*
- *If required to turn back, start with the last vehicle first, and drive in reverse until it is safe for all vehicles to turn around.*

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Traffic accidents involving CARE staff can be minimized by implementing defensive driver training and other precautions, but they can never be avoided entirely. When an accident is mishandled, it can quickly change from an unfortunate occurrence into a security risk. In extreme situations, it can trigger violence or threats of retribution. The following procedures are useful when involved in an accident.

- *Quickly discern the attitudes and actions of people around the accident site to ensure that the staff member is not at risk by staying.*
- *Do not leave the site unless staff safety is jeopardized and then only to drive to the nearest police or military post.*
- *Provide care and assistance as appropriate. As appropriate, contact local authorities immediately and cooperate as required. Contact the Country Office as soon as practical.*
- *If feasible, take pictures of the scene and record the names and contact information of witnesses, responding authorities, and those involved.*
- *When approaching an accident involving other vehicles consider safety and security, taking care not to become involved in a second accident while responding.*

SECURITY AT CHECKPOINTS

Checkpoints are manned by personnel with varying degrees of experience, education, or training. Regard all checkpoints with caution, especially in the evening. All staff should receive specific training on identifying and navigating the variety of checkpoints encountered in a given area.

- *Avoid checkpoints whenever possible. Increase attentiveness when approaching checkpoints or possible threat areas.*
- *Consider later departure times to ensure others have traveled the route. When approaching a checkpoint or threat area, if possible allow others to pass through the area and observe from a safe distance.*
- *Approach slowly with window slightly opened.*
- *At night, switch to low beams and put on the interior light.*
- *Be ready to stop quickly, but stop only if requested.*
- *Keep hands visible at all times. Do not make sudden movements.*
- *Show ID if requested, but do not surrender it unless it is insisted.*

- *Leave the vehicle only if requested. If the checkpoint is not judged to be an attempted carjacking, turn the vehicle off and take keys. Remain close to the vehicle if possible.*
- *Do not make sudden attempts to hide or move items within the vehicle. High theft items, such as radios, cameras, and computers, should always be stored in nondescript containers or kept out of sight.*
- *Comply with requests to search the vehicle. Accompany the searcher to ensure nothing is planted or stolen.*
- *Use judgement about protesting if items are removed. Do not aggressively resist if something is taken. Request documentation if possible.*
- *Do not offer goods in exchange for passage. This can make it more difficult for later travelers.*

4.9 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WOMEN

Female CARE staff members should never be pressured, or allowed to forgo common sense safety measures, to prove themselves in the field. General safety and security measures are the same for everyone. Both men and women should review all sections of this handbook. Additionally, women should consider the following:

- Upgrade hotel accommodations if they feel unsafe.
- For long-term housing, consider sharing a residence with another woman or living in a group home or apartment.
- Do not use first names in the telephone book or by the entryway or doorbell.
- Do not hesitate to call attention when in danger. Scream, shout, run, or sound the vehicle horn.
- Immediately leave a location or person that feels uncomfortable.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In any area, sexual harassment is incompatible with providing a safe and secure working environment and as such is unacceptable. Sexual harassment can be directed at men or women, but women are most often the targets. Staff members should be aware when someone is focusing unwanted attention on them or others with overt or subtle pressure or by other actions or comments. Each Country Office will clearly post the CARE Sexual Harassment Guidelines and ensure all staff know and comply with them. The Country Office will investigate all sexual harassment complaints in accordance with CARE policies and procedures.

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

- Exercise caution when meeting people. Arrange the meeting in a public place or with others.
- Communicate clearly. Be assertive and insist on being treated with respect.

4.10 FAMILY MEMBERS

Families of national and international staff are just as exposed to threats from crime and other local risks as the staff but are often overlooked. Including family members in a basic safety and security training program can enhance overall office security and safety and should be part of the standard indoctrination training for all new hires. Some procedures that should be stressed to all family members include:

- All staff members and their families should register with the appropriate embassy and know its emergency evacuation procedures.
- Family members should know the address and telephone numbers for the office and residence and know how to use the local telephones, both public and private, and radios if in use.
- Family members should avoid local disturbances, demonstrations, crowds, or other high-risk areas. In areas of significant risks the location of family members should be known at all times. Family members should be encouraged to develop the habit of “checking in” before departure, after arrival, or when changing plans.
- Everyone should know the personal security procedures for the region and policies and procedures in case of natural disasters, bombings, or assault.
- Everyone should receive fire and electrical safety training and know the location of safety equipment such as fire extinguishers.
- A Record of Emergency Data (RED) should be completed on family members as appropriate.
- Procedures for childcare should be carefully laid out, such as who can pick up children from school, etc.

4.11 FIRE AND ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Basic safety and security procedures are often overlooked in Country Offices and residences. Simple improvements in fire and electrical safety and first aid training and procedures can safeguard all staff, national and international, and should be the first step in any Country Office security plan. Individual staff members, even when traveling, should make every attempt to adhere to common-sense precautions concerning fire and electrical safety. Staff members should take advantage of local or Country Office fire and electrical safety training and include family members. Appendix A: Safety and Security Assessment Checklist provides guidelines for ensuring a safe living and working environment. Minimum general guidelines include:

Fire extinguishers

Install and regularly inspect extinguishers useful for all possible fires in all vehicles, offices and residences. Know the location of fire alarms and extinguishers, if present, in hotels, residences and offices.

Emergency exits

Every office and residence should have a primary and secondary exit route. Plan ahead on how to exit the office, residence or hotel room in the case of fire.

Smoking areas

Smoke only in designated areas and dispose of cigarettes properly.

Electrical safety

The electrical condition of many Country Offices and residences can be considered poor, with overloaded circuits, poor maintenance and inferior wiring. This can increase the risk of electrical shock or fire. Measures to improve electrical safety include:

- *Conduct regular inspections of residences and office spaces (See Appendix A: Safety and Security Assessment Checklist) and correct electrical discrepancies.*
- *Locate and mark the electrical cut-off for all offices and residences. The cut-off should be kept free from obstruction, should never be in a locked space, and everyone should be made aware of its location.*

Smoke detectors

When available, smoke detectors should be placed where there is cooking or a heat source (lounges with microwaves, coffeepots, kitchens, etc.) and by the main electrical circuit box. Detectors should be tamper resistant, ideally using a sealed power source to prevent battery theft.

4.12 OFFICES AND RESIDENCE SAFETY AND SECURITY

LOCKS AND KEYS

Having secure locks and proper key management is central to the concept of physical security. Cheap locks are easily overcome or bypassed, and secure locks are worthless if their keys are not protected from unauthorized access. Some general guidelines for lock and key security include:

- *Keep a minimum number of keys for each lock and strictly control who has access to them. Keep household keys separate from vehicle keys.*
- *Use caution when providing keys to house staff.*
- *Do not allow duplicate keys to be made without permission, and record who has each duplicate.*
- *If a key is lost under suspicious circumstances have a new lock fitted.*
- *Never leave keys under the mat or in other obvious hiding places.*

DOORS

- Solid doors provide important protection against theft. Install a peephole, safety chain, strong locks and bolts, lights and intercom (where appropriate) at the main entrance. Keep entrance doors locked at all times, even when at home.
- When answering the door, identify visitors first through an adjacent window, a peephole, or a safety-chained door.
- Use an outside light when answering the door at night to illuminate your visitor. Do not turn on the interior light.
- Pay attention to interior doors. In some areas heavy steel internal doors can be used to create “safe rooms” for use during emergency or criminal attack.

WINDOWS

- Keep access windows locked whenever possible. Bars on windows can prevent unwanted entry but ensure that proper emergency and fire exits are created. In some cases this involves certain windows fitted with hinged bars and locks. Those designated for emergency exit should have working locks on them with keys kept nearby in an easily accessed and well marked location.
- After dark, keep curtains or blinds closed. Draw curtains before turning on lights and turn off lights before drawing back curtains.
- In areas where there is a threat of violence or disaster, select offices and residences without large glass windows and use heavy curtains over all windows.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENCES IN INSECURE ENVIRONMENTS

Additional security measures should be taken if located in an environment with a high crime level or potential for insecurity or disaster.

- *Know and practice the Country Office evacuation plan and ensure coordination with embassy and other agency (UN, host nation, etc.) plans.*
- *Select housing as far as possible from host nation military bases.*
- *An apartment located above the ground or first floor is considered more secure than a single-family dwelling.*
- *If multiple CARE staff families are in the same city or area, select housing that is in close proximity.*
- *Keep shrubbery and bushes around residences trimmed low.*
- *Establish a family communication and support system, especially for families of staff members who travel often.*
- *Preplan for emergencies by stocking extra water, food, and supplies.*
- *Establish a back-up power supply if appropriate.*
- *Be familiar with the routes to approved hospitals or clinics.*

RESIDENCE STAFF

Trustworthy and competent staff employed at private residences can contribute to security. However, even trustworthy staff, if inadequately briefed, may unwittingly endanger the safety of the staff or family. Guidelines for residence staff include:

- Whenever possible, hire domestic staff that are recommended by others.
- Thoroughly evaluate any applicant for employment. Conduct background checks as appropriate. Take the staff member's photograph and attach it to their personnel record.
- Give all new staff a security briefing to include guidelines for:
 - *Visitor procedures and unexpected visitors.*
 - *Telephone calls and messages, including what to tell people during residence absence.*
 - *Procedures for securing keys, windows and doors.*
 - *Emergency procedures and emergency telephone numbers.*
 - *Safety and security incidents, such as fire, electrical safety, or attempted robbery or attack.*
 - *Handling family affairs, habits, and movements with discretion.*
- Dismissing a residence staff person should be conducted in a timely manner, avoiding confrontation. Financial considerations in the event of dismissal should be discussed and agreed upon when hiring.