



## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** AUBURN UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND STAFF  
**FROM:** DEPARTMENT OF RISK MANAGEMENT & INSURANCE  
**SUBJECT:** FOREIGN TRAVEL GUIDELINES AND TIPS FOR FACULTY AND STAFF  
**DATE:** PUBLISHED 4/14/2008

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## **Foreign Travel Guidelines and Tips for Faculty and Staff**

Personal safety is the traveler's responsibility. The following list of non-exclusive safety tips for domestic travel is provided by the Auburn University Department of Risk Management and Insurance to faculty and staff traveling abroad.

### **Driving in a Foreign Country**

#### **Tips on Driving Abroad**

- Helpful information online.
  - Check the United States Department of State website for up-to-date information on driving in a foreign country. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_1179.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1179.html)
  - The Department of State website also contains Consular Information Sheets with safety issues, including driver safety, in most foreign countries. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)
  - The Department of state website also contains Background Notes on most foreign countries that may provide helpful driver information. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>
  - Check with the embassy or consulate of the countries where you will visit to learn about requirements for driver's licenses, road permits, and auto insurance. <http://usembassy.state.gov/>
- Information may also be available from the foreign embassy in the United States, foreign government tourism offices, or from a car rental company in the foreign country.
  - Links to foreign embassies. <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html>
  - Links to foreign tourism offices. <http://www.towd.com/>
- It is important to be aware of the rules of the road in other countries, and the fact that road conditions can vary widely. It is also important to be aware of security concerns when driving abroad.
- Obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) through the State Department.
  - Carry both your IDP and your state driver's license with you at all times. Many countries have different driving rules. If possible, obtain a copy of the foreign country's rules before you begin driving in that country.
  - Although many countries do not recognize U.S. driver's licenses, most countries accept an international driving permit (IDP).
  - IDPs are honored in more than 150 countries outside the U.S.

- They function as an official translation of a U.S. driver's license into 10 foreign languages. These licenses are not intended to replace valid U.S. state licenses and should only be used as a supplement to a valid license. IDPs are not valid in an individual's country of residence.
- Before departure, you can obtain an IDP at a local office of one of the two automobile associations authorized by the U.S. Department of State:
  - The American Automobile Association, and
    - [http://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpapple.html?association=AAA&clb\\_id=212&secure=N](http://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpapple.html?association=AAA&clb_id=212&secure=N)
  - The American Automobile Touring Alliance.
    - [http://thenac.com/international\\_driving\\_permit.pdf](http://thenac.com/international_driving_permit.pdf)
- To apply for an international driving permit, you must be at least age 18, and you will need to present two passport-size photographs and your valid U.S. license.
- Some countries have a minimum and maximum driving age.
- Certain countries require road permits, instead of tolls, to use on their divided highways, and they will fine those found driving without a permit.
- Always "buckle up." Some countries have penalties for people who violate this law.
- Many countries require you to honk your horn before going around a sharp corner or to flash your lights before passing.
- Before you start your journey, find out who has the right of way in a traffic circle.
- If the drivers in the country you are visiting drive on the opposite side of the road than in the U.S., it may be prudent to practice driving in a less populated area before attempting to drive in heavy traffic.
- Always know the route you will be traveling. Have a copy of a good road map, and chart your course before beginning.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers or strangers.
- When entering your vehicle, be aware of your surroundings.

### **Avoiding a Carjacking**

- Helpful information online.
  - Check the United States Department of State website for detailed information on handling carjacking situations. <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/rls/rpt/19782.htm>
- When in your car, always keep the doors locked. Any time you drive through areas containing stoplights, stop signs, or anything that significantly reduces vehicular speed, keep your windows up.
- Leave ample maneuvering space between your vehicle and the one in front of you. If you are approached by suspicious persons while you are stopped, do not roll down windows; drive away quickly.
- If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility. Once you find a place of safety, don't worry about using a legal parking space. Park as close as you can, and get inside fast.
- If another driver tries to force you to pull over or to cut you off, keep driving and try to get away. Try to note the license plate number of the car and a description of the car and driver. If this effort places you in danger, don't do it. The information is not as important as your safety.
- If you are being followed, never lead the person back to your home or stop and get out. Drive to the nearest police station, public facility, or U.S. mission. (You could verify surveillance by going completely around an arbitrarily chosen block.) Always report these incidents to the RSO or PSO.

- If you are traveling alone and a car “bumps” into you, don’t stop to exchange accident information. Go to the nearest service station or other public place to call the police. (Check with your RSO or PSO to see if this advice is appropriate for your post.)
- Never, ever pick up hitchhikers!
- When you park, look for a spot that offers good lighting and is close to a location where there are a lot of people. Lock valuables in the trunk, and lock all doors.
- Extra precautions are necessary when shopping. If you take packages out to lock them in your trunk, then plan to return to the stores to do more shopping, it may be a good idea to move your car to another section of the parking lot or street. The criminal knows that you will be coming back and can wait to ambush you. By moving your car, you give the impression you’re leaving. If you think you are being followed, do not go back to your car. Return to the safety of the occupied shopping area or office building and contact the authorities.
- If you have car trouble on the road, raise your hood. If you have a radio antenna, place a handkerchief or other flag there. When people stop to help, don’t get out of the car unless you know them or it’s the police. Ask the “good samaritan” to stop at the nearest service station and report your problem.
- If you are in a parking lot or parked on the street and have trouble, be wary of personal assistance from strangers. Go to the nearest telephone and call a repair service or friend for assistance. If you feel threatened by the presence of nearby strangers, lock yourself in your car and blow the horn to attract attention of others.

### **General Driving Tips**

- Reliable transportation should be selected. A Pre-Trip inspection of the vehicle is recommended.
- Driver must operate the vehicle in a professional manner.
- Driver must be in possession of a valid driver license.
- Driver should have experience driving the type of vehicle he/she will be operating for Auburn University.
- Fifteen-Passenger Vans should not be used to transport passengers.
- Driver should attend Auburn University’s Defensive Driving Class or other approved defensive driver training program.
- Driver of Fifteen-Passenger Vans should attend Auburn University’s Van Safety Class.
- Driver should have an acceptable motor vehicle record.
- Seat belts and other occupant restraint devices should be worn at all times by the driver and occupants.
- Driver must operate the vehicle in accordance with all traffic laws, ordinances and regulations.
- Vehicles should not be used to transport unauthorized passengers.
- Vehicle should be driven at speeds that are appropriate for road conditions.
- Driver must not use a cellular phone when vehicle is in motion.
- Driver must not drive if drowsy or under the influence of any substance.
- Driver should not drive for long periods of time without breaks. Breaks are recommended at a minimum of every two hours. Maximum driving time recommended in a 24 hour period is eight (8) hours.
- Require that the people responsible for the trip and the drivers know the route and an alternative route prior to departure.
- Require that the people responsible for the trip and the drivers know the predicted weather prior to departure. If inclement weather is expected, consider setting guidelines for alternate transportation.
- Driver should turn off the vehicle, remove the keys and lock the doors when left unattended.

- Driver must immediately report all accidents to the local law enforcement agency, immediate supervisor and Risk Management and Safety.

### **Use of Privately Owned Vehicles**

- Personal vehicles should only be used on a voluntary basis; the owners/drivers must provide their own Insurance coverage; all student participants choosing to ride in a private automobile do so voluntarily and at their own risk.
  - The University shall not insure or accept liability for any damage, loss or injury resulting from the use of personal vehicle(s).
  - The University does not provide comprehensive or collision (physical damage) insurance for an employee's personal vehicle driven on University business and the employee is responsible for primary liability insurance.
  - The University does carry non-owner excess liability coverage to protect the University and employee in the event of a suit resulting from an automobile accident in which an employee was driving on university business
- While private automobiles provide a very cost effective means of transportation, there are disadvantages that must be considered. Liability issues should be a primary concern for those that choose to use personal automobiles to travel. Be sure that each vehicle has appropriate insurance, current inspection and registration and that individuals traveling in private vehicles understand that they do so at their own risk. Drivers need to be aware that by choosing to drive, they assume responsibility for the safety of those traveling in their vehicle. This means that drivers should take care to follow all traffic laws and safety guidelines, and should also make sure that their vehicle is in a safe working condition before beginning the trip.
- If employees use their own vehicles, and/or transport others as passengers, they should be informed, in advance, that their personal insurance will be primarily responsible for any liability that may arise from such use.
- Employees driving privately owned vehicles must:
  - Have a valid driver's license
  - Possess personal automobile insurance coverage as mandated by the State of Alabama
  - Have a current vehicle registration

*Note: Auburn University is not responsible for personal items left in a vehicle.*

*It is also recommended that group travel be contracted with an outside vendor whenever possible/practical.*

### **Car Insurance**

- Car rental agencies overseas usually provide auto insurance, but in some countries, the required coverage is minimal. When renting a car overseas, consider purchasing insurance coverage that is at least equivalent to that which you carry at home.
- In general, your U.S. auto insurance does not cover you abroad. However, your policy may apply when you drive to countries neighboring the United States.
- Check with your insurer to see if your policy covers you in Canada, Mexico, or countries south of Mexico. Even if your policy is valid in one of these countries, it may not meet that country's minimum requirements. For instance, in most of Canada, you must carry at least \$200,000 in liability insurance, and Mexico requires that, if vehicles do not carry theft, third party liability, and comprehensive insurance, the owner must post a bond that could be as high as 50% of the value of the vehicle.

- If you are under-insured for a country, auto insurance can usually be purchased on either side of the border.

## **Taxi and Mass Transit Safety Checklist**

### **Suggestions for Road Safety in a Taxi**

- Be aware of traffic patterns and local road culture.
- Avoid overcrowded taxis.
- Be alert for reckless driving (e.g. speeding, inattention to driving, apparent drowsiness, disregard for signage and signals).
- If driver is irresponsible, get out at first safe opportunity.
- If you feel you are at risk, speak up!
- Avoid riding with drivers who seem to be under influence or alcohol or medication, or appear over-tired, irrational or distracted.
- Ride only in taxis with functional seat-belts in back seat.
- Avoid night travel, especially in rural areas.

### **Suggestions for Physical Security in a Taxi**

- If you are unsure of which taxi companies are acceptable, inquire at the airport information desk, hotel concierge desk, shop keeper, restaurant personnel or program staff. They might also be able to help with communication problems you may encounter. Have a local write your destination for the taxi driver to read.
- Plan ahead how to get home before you go out.
- Take a business card with the phone number of a reputable minicab or taxi company, phone for the taxi when you need it.
- Do not travel alone. When possible, travel in groups.
- Calling for a taxi is the safest way to travel, especially at night.
- Try not to let anyone overhear you ordering a taxi. If they hear your name and destination, they may pretend to be the taxi you ordered.
- If you have ordered a taxi, wait for the driver should approach you. Do not approach a car that you think is your taxi.
- Ask the driver the name and destination he has been given to check he is your driver. Don't get into a taxi you haven't ordered.
- If you must hail a taxi, spot one from a well known and reliable company. This requires some advanced knowledge of taxi companies in the area.
- Before getting into the taxi, make sure the driver agrees to take you to your destination.
- When you get into the taxi, note the company name, code number displayed, driver's name, ID and photograph if possible.
- Do not accept rides from drivers who randomly approach you.
- Sit in the back seat.

### **Bus & Minivan Safety Checklist**

- Be aware of traffic patterns and local road culture.
- Wait for the bus in a safe place – away from the road.
- Whenever possible, avoid overcrowded buses and minivans.
- Be alert for reckless driving (e.g. speeding, inattention to driving, apparent drowsiness, disregard for signage and signals).
- Insist that the driver be responsible or get off at the first possible safe opportunity.

- If you feel you are at risk, speak up!
- After you get off the bus take several steps out of the danger zone.
- If you drop something near the bus, tell the driver before you pick it up.
- Stand several steps away from the road while waiting for the bus.
- After getting driver's attention, cross the street in front of the bus. Never go behind the bus.
- Stay seated at all times.
- Avoid night travel, especially in rural areas.

## **Personal Security While Traveling**

### **General Safety Tips**

- Notify your family and friends of your departure and return dates, but don't otherwise publicize your travel or vacation plans. Leave contact numbers with appropriate mission personnel.
- Check plane, train, and bus times before you travel.
- Sit near other people or near aisles or doors. Learn the location of emergency alarms and exits.
- Stay awake and alert when using public transportation.
- Consider purchasing special clothing or accessories to hide your passport, money, or credit cards. Keep the majority of your funds in travelers checks and hidden; carry some in your wallet or handbag. Use a money clip. If you are robbed, you may lose the money in the clip but will retain important credit cards and documents.
- Keep valuables out of sight and luggage close at hand. If carrying a handbag, keep it in front of you, closed, with the fastening toward your body. Keep a wallet in your front pants pocket.
- Let go if your bag is snatched.
- Do some research on the area you are visiting. Talk to your security officer or consular colleagues regarding travel advisories or warnings.
- When traveling, dress casually; dress down where appropriate. Be aware of local customs.
- Don't wear excess jewelry. Reduce wallet and purse contents, particularly cards denoting affiliations, memberships, accounts, etc.
- At airports, proceed through security checks and go to the boarding area as quickly as possible. These areas are usually the most secure in the airport.
- In any crowded situation, be aware of any crowding or jostling, even if it appears innocent. This is often a ploy by pickpockets to distract you.
- Be very careful any time you use a telephone calling card. Fraudulent uses of these cards are on the rise. Look for people observing your card or your fingers as you dial your code. Avoid being heard giving the number to local telephone operators.

### **Additional Security Tips for Hotels in Foreign Countries**

- Check with the Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Embassy for a list of hotels utilized by officials visiting the area.
- If traveling abroad consider making reservations using your employer's street address, without identifying the company, and using your personal credit card. Again, the less known about your travel itinerary, and who you represent, the better.
- Request information about parking arrangements if anticipating renting an automobile.
- Be aware that credit card information has been compromised in the past. Always audit monthly credit card statements to ensure that unauthorized use has not been made of your account.
- The most vulnerable part of your journey is traveling between the point of debarkation/embarcation and the hotel. Do not linger or wander unnecessarily in the parking lot, indoor garage or public space around the hotel - be alert for suspicious persons and behavior.

Watch for distractions that are intentionally staged to setup a pickpocket, luggage theft or purse snatch.

- Stay with your luggage until it is brought into the lobby, or placed into the taxi or limo.
- Consider using the bellman. Luggage in the "care, custody and control" of the hotel causes the hotel to be liable for your property. Protect claim checks; they are your evidence!
- Keep in mind though that there are limits of liability created by states and countries to protect hoteliers. Personal travel documents, lap tops, jewelry, and other valuables and sensitive documents in excess of \$1,000 in value should be hand carried and personally protected.
- If you arrive by auto, park as close to a hotel access point as possible, and park in a lighted area. Remove all property from the car interior and place it in the trunk. Avoid leaving valuables or personal documents in the glove compartment. Prior to leaving the security of the vehicle, note any suspicious persons or behavior.
- If using valet service, leave only the ignition key, and take trunk, house, or office keys with you. Often, valets are not employees of the hotel and work for contract firms.
- Parking garages are difficult to secure. Avoid dimly lit garages that are not patrolled and do not have security telephones or intercoms.
- Female travelers should consider asking for an escort to their vehicles whether parked in the lot or garage.
- In some countries, your passport may be temporarily held by the hotel for review by the police or other authorities. Obtain its return at the earliest possible time.
- Be aware of persons in the hotel lobby who may have unusual interest in your arrival.
- If carrying your luggage, keep it within view or touch. One recommendation is to position luggage against your leg during registration but place a briefcase or a purse on the desk or counter in front of you.
- Ground floor rooms which open to a pool area or beach with sliding glass doors and window access are considered vulnerable. Depending upon the situation, area, and security coverage, exercise a higher level of security if assigned a first floor room.
- It is suggested that female travelers request rooms that are away from the elevator landing and stairwells. This is to avoid being caught by surprise by persons exiting the elevator with you or hiding in the stairwell.
- Always accept bellman assistance upon check-in. Allow the bellman to open the room, turn lights on, check the room to ensure that it is vacant and ready for your stay. Before dismissing the bellman, always inspect the door lock, locks on sliding glass doors, optical viewer, privacy latch or chain, guest room safes, dead bolt lock on interconnecting suite door, and telephone. If a discrepancy is found, request a room change.
- Ask where the nearest fire stairwell is located. Make a mental note which direction you must turn and approximately how many steps there are to the closest fire stairwell. In the event of a fire, there is frequently dense smoke and no lighting.
- Note how hotel staff is uniformed and identified. Many "pretext" crimes occur by persons misrepresenting themselves as hotel employees on house telephones to gain access to guest rooms. Avoid permitting a person into the guest room unless you have confirmed that the person is authorized to enter. This can be verified by using the optical viewer and by calling the front desk.

## **General Travel Tips**

### **Sexual Assault Prevention**

- Be alert. Don't assume that you are always safe. Think about your safety everywhere. Your best protection is avoiding dangerous situations.

- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in any situation, leave.
- Always walk, drive, and park your car in well-lit areas.
- Walk confidently at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys.
- Wear clothes and shoes that allow freedom of movement.
- Walk to your car with keys in your hand.
- If you have car trouble, raise the hood and stay inside your car. If a stranger wants to help, have him or her call for help. Don't leave your car.
- Keep your car doors locked and never pick up hitchhikers.
- Make sure all windows and doors in your home are locked, especially if you are home alone.
- Never give the impression that you are home alone if strangers telephone or come to the door.
- If a stranger asks to use your phone, have him wait outside while you make the call.
- If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, don't go in. Go to the nearest phone and call the local law enforcement authorities.

**FOR ADDITIONAL TIPS ON SAFE TRAVEL ABROAD VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEB SITES:**

**Overseas Security Advisory Council - Security Guidelines for American Families Living Abroad**

<https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=30022>

**Overseas Security Advisory Council - Personal Security Guidelines for the American Business Traveler Overseas**

<https://www.osac.gov/Reports/report.cfm?contentID=30030>

**U.S. Department of State Tips for Safe Travel Abroad**

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips\\_1232.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html)

**U.S. Department of State Current Travel Warnings**

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html)

**U.S. Department of State Counselor Information Sheets**

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)

**U.S. Department of State International Travel Safety Information for Students**

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/safety/safety\\_2836.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/safety/safety_2836.html)