

Overseas Disasters Checklist: the Immediate Af

Members of Disaster Action (DA), who have all been directly affected by disasters, have written this guide for those whose friends and family may be missing in a disaster overseas. Every disaster is unique, but our aim is to provide you with a checklist of things you could do in the immediate aftermath. You may not feel able to do all this yourself. If not, try to get the family to do so.

Advice on what you need to do before leaving the UK is available from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website. Help may also be available from an airline, tour operator or if the missing person(s) was travelling with their company. General information on the disaster is likely to be available through Internet news. DA leaflet *A Disaster Overseas*. The British Red Cross provides a tracing and messaging service to help find missing relatives abroad, through www.redcross.org.uk/trace.

When you believe someone may be missing overseas

Try to:

- Establish their last known location
- Call their mobile phone
- Visit any social networking sites they may be members of
- Contact their hotel
- Call the mobile phones of friends who may be with them
- Contact friends and family in the UK to check if they have heard from them.

If you still cannot locate them

In the event of a crisis the FCO may issue an emergency number, advertised through the media. Other than 0207 0081500. Alternatively, any airline/tour operator involved may set up an emergency number. Have the following information ready before you call:

- Details of their travel itinerary (flights, hotel and tour operator) if relevant
- Full names, address and date of birth for those missing
- Photocopy of their passport if possible
- Name of their travel insurance company if known
- Keep trying the emergency telephone number – it is likely to be very busy. When you do get through they are unlikely to have specific information about the person you are calling about at that time. They will try to give you the best advice you give to assist in the process of identifying those who are likely to be involved in the incident
- See FCO information leaflet *Missing Persons Abroad*, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/193666/Missing_Persons_Abroad.pdf for information on what consular staff can and cannot do to help
- NB: If your missing relative or friend is found, let the FCO or police know. This will help those who are still missing and their families.

Credit and bank cards

If you know what credit and bank cards they hold:

- Contact the card companies to see if they can confirm recent use and the location. Explain your situation and remember that Data Protection rules restrict what can be disclosed. They can advise you of the procedure.

Preparing to Travel to the Disaster Site

You may wish to travel to the site; if so, seek advice on issues such as whether it is safe to do so and the risks you may encounter before making your decision. If you do decide to go, see the checklist below:

- It is best **not to travel alone** – take someone with you if possible
- Check that your **passport is valid and its expiry date** – some countries require six months validity
- Check if a **visa** is required
- **Book travel** through the missing person's(s) travel company (if relevant)
- Tell the FCO if you are happy for your **name and contact details to be given to other families**
- Obtain the **British Embassy/High Commission/Consulate contact details** for where you are going from the website
- Check **FCO Travel Advice** for the country you are travelling to (see www.fco.gov.uk). You can sign up for a travel advice alert; follow FCOTravel on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). For real time travel advice updates follow the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate on Twitter and Facebook
- Check **weather at destination** and pack accordingly for 4/5 days
- Arrange **travel insurance** for yourself and anyone accompanying you
- Agree with family and friends one person to be the **single point of contact** in UK
- Get the **most recent photograph** of the missing person(s) and make multiple copies (height and weight - clear - no sunglasses)
- Prepare a list of any **special identifying features** (scars, tattoos, piercings, birthmarks)
- Obtain their **dental records/X-rays** if possible
- Photocopy of **their passport**
- Photocopy/details of **their travel documents**
- Copy of **their insurance details**
- Ask their insurers **what will be paid for** (e.g. flights, hotel, meals, hotel phone, taxis)
- **Charge your mobile**. Pack the **charger and power converter** (remember it costs *you* to receive calls and texts, much cheaper to text. Travel insurers may be less likely to pay mobile than hotel phone bills). Credit cards are not available in some countries
- Get **foreign currency** for destination
- Tell your **credit card company** where you are going and check your card has capacity.

When you arrive at your destination

- Contact the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate for latest information and to inform them of your location and plans
- Call your UK contact with your hotel phone number and room number
- Agree set times for daily contact (bear in mind time differences) and keep in regular contact with them so they are aware of your whereabouts
- Get in touch with relevant local tour operator if appropriate
- Keep receipts for everything (for insurance reimbursement)
- Drink lots of water in hot countries and try to eat healthily for energy.

Disaster Action would like to thank all those who contributed to the writing of this leaflet.