



Marks & Spencer: Better communications for business resilience

How comprehensive communications underpin an effective Travel Safe programme

Marks & Spencer plc, the winner of the International SOS Foundation's 2017 Duty of Care Award in the category Communications, has developed an innovative Travel Safe programme. Supported by comprehensive communications using advanced technology across many different channels, the company delivers appropriate assistance and advice when and where needed.

Marks & Spencer plc (M&S) is an iconic, international retailer headquartered in the United Kingdom. M&S is known globally for its own brand, high-quality food and clothing sold in 1,400 stores and online. The company employs 83,000 people worldwide in 60 international territories. Last year, over 8,000 essential business trips were made by M&S people including to 'high-risk' destinations.

In response to the increasing risk of global terrorism and natural disasters worldwide, the M&S Business Continuity (BC) Team developed rigorous control measures and safeguards to protect business travellers. These included a number of communications features which are essential to their effectiveness.

The Travel Safe Programme

John Frost, Head of Business Continuity (BC), M&S, outlines the approach: **"Cancelling travel altogether is rarely an option, as sourcing merchandise is a multi-billion dollar operation, critical to our business. We also carry out ethical and social compliance visits. Our approach to Duty of Care is to provide a service that puts our people at the heart of the programme. Employees can travel on business and feel supported."**

Strict procedures apply to travellers going to high risk destinations. Authorisation will only be given after a pre-trip briefing by a member of the BC team. The traveller receives a Journey Management Plan containing detailed guidance on in-country safety aspects, from arrival at the airport to safety at the hotel and elsewhere.

Travel Safe includes the following features applicable to all travellers:

The Latest Technology

Travel Safe App:

All M&S travellers have access to their medical/security incident response plan via a smartphone App. Travellers can research their destination before travelling, and seek assistance during travel. Any incidents are escalated to the BC Team by an external medical and security assistance provider. Traveller journeys are also tracked through a system; enabling the BC team to provide immediate advice and communications should an incident occur.

As well as assisting people, the BC team protects physical locations. All stores and offices are mapped in a tracking system, prompting alerts if an incident occurs within a building's vicinity.

Vismo App:

All business travellers have the 'Vismo' GPS tracking App that turns any smartphone, iPhone or tablet into a mobile tracking device. This enables M&S to pinpoint the individual's physical location at any time, and it includes a covert panic button and an alert feature. Any traveller visiting a high-risk destination is required to download the App.

In-depth Information

Preferred Hotel List:

This identifies specific hotels in medium/high-risk destinations, which reach required levels of security. The list is reviewed frequently and communicated via several channels to travellers and sent to booking agents.

Risk Assessments:

The team has carried out in-depth risk assessments of specific higher risk countries. These results are shared with those countries' embassies, thereby fostering future relationships and cooperation.

LGBT Travel:

M&S has a strong diversity and inclusion programme. To support LGBT colleagues, the BC Team has updated all Pre-Travel Advisories with sign posts and specific travel guidance for LGBT travellers.



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Above M&S travel includes medium and high risk destinations

Using All Channels

M&S takes a creative approach to travel risk communications. It uses a variety of channels to engage with highly-mobile and dispersed employees at offices, facilities and supplier operations. Conscious that employees receive a high volume of digital information and alerts, the company also uses face-to-face interaction, printed materials and personal training to support utilisation, understanding and compliance with policy. These channels include:

Engagement Emails:

An external assistance provider sends weekly updates to the BC team listing all forthcoming travel. The team uses this distribution list to send custom email reminders on the Apps and other information and advice available.

Engagement in Person:

The BC team attends business unit 'huddles' across the organisation. These meetings have proved one of the most effective ways to engage travellers.

Intranet:

The BC team regularly releases bulletins via the M&S intranet under the My Safety banner. For example, following incidents in Brussels and Turkey, bulletins covered preferred hotel updates and the temporary travel suspension to Turkey.

Travel Safe Stand:

The team worked with an external medical and security assistance provider to set up a lunch time information display stand in M&S restaurants to promote the Travel Safe Programme.

Other Channels:

Social Media, Vodcasts, Digital Newsletters and ELearning are other tools used to spread the word.

Working with Others

Team Work:

Each business unit has a crisis management and

business recovery plan. The BC team works closely with the plan holders and writers, and their PAs, to ensure messages are sent to all individuals within an area.

Sharing Best Practice:

M&S chairs the Retail Business Continuity Association (RBCA) made up of 30 leading UK retailers. It meets quarterly to discuss emerging risks, share practical advice and case studies. In February 2017, M&S organised a crisis simulation exercise featuring three travel risk scenarios.

John Frost concludes:

"Fulfilling the Duty of Care to our people as they travel and work globally is tied to the success of our retail operations. In developing the Travel Safe Programme, we considered the specific needs of our travellers, our operational and supplier footprint, physical assets and of course, the ever-changing risks. We put sound policy, procedures and technology to communicate and facilitate education and incident response. This helps us operate more sustainably and with greater resilience."

KEY ELEMENTS

An effective Travel Safe Programme involves the following communication elements:

Using the latest technology to support employees on the move.

All advice and assistance to be based on up-to-date and accurate information

Using all available communications channels

Working with others to spread the word and share best practice