

Effective Management of Crises and Emergencies While Abroad

Most students returning from study abroad can talk freely about the many valuable aspects of their time abroad and can definitely say that it was one of the most valuable parts of their college or university. While most students experience a safe and healthy time abroad, some are forced to deal with minor crises like losing their passport, being victim to minor robbery or pickpockets, a minor illness or injury. In an unfamiliar environment with communication, cultural barriers and, in some cases, language barriers, a minor crisis may be more difficult to handle. Small emergencies abroad can seem like larger ones due to language and communication barriers, and a lack of familiarity with foreign surroundings or an understanding of the customs and laws of your host country. There may also be a few students who encounter a major emergency while abroad, such as a serious illness or injury, traffic accident, natural disaster, or violent crime. Being able to deal with a crisis situation includes understanding your emotions, keeping yourself safe, and having coping mechanisms. Creating and maintaining a “personal emergency action plan” is a good start:

Documents that should be included as part of your “personal emergency action plan:”

- Multiple copies of Passport and Visa (where applicable)
- Copy of Emergency Card (with general contact numbers at Linfield and onsite information which are destination-specific) issued by Linfield’s International Programs Office.
- Copy of Insurance Card/Information
- Copy of Area Maps of your destination (should be purchased on your own)
- Multiple copies of your Electronic Air Ticket, with confirmation and ticket numbers highlighted
- Special Medical Needs Treatment, if applicable (a medical bracelet is recommended)
- Visit a dentist within 6-8 weeks of departure
- Power of Attorney (if you are out of the country for a long time)
- Copy of your home state drivers license
- Cell phone (with a chip applicable to your destination), a loaded Calling Card. Texting function on your cell phone may still work even though your phone service may not operate in certain circumstances such as an earthquake, flooding or political upheaval.
- ATM/Credit Card, US currency, currency of your host country
- Sample Emergency/First Aid Kit
A small flashlight, a whistle, a small pocket knife and scissors (not on plane, but in your checked luggage), adhesive bandages, elastic bandage (ace-type), antibiotic ointment, gauze pads, first aid tape, sun block (if applicable), lip ointment, burn cream, aspirin, Benadryl, pain reliever, insect repellent, ample supply of prescription medication (if any), travel size tissue packets and a few “energy bars.” Some of these items can and should be carried with you when you are out and about. *(Items will vary by location and personal needs)*

Steps to help you stay calm and use your “personal emergency action plan” more effectively in an emergency:

- STEP ONE **Remain calm.** Take a deep breath. You will need a clear head in order to focus on your next move.
- STEP TWO **Assess the situation/get advice from program staff/faculty at the destination.** Identify in what kind of emergency situation you find yourself. Contact program staff for advice. An emergency / crisis can be:
1. Personal: Accident / Injury, Death, Illness, Family Problem, Sexual Assault, Potential Kidnapping, Arrest, etc.
 2. Regional: Natural / Environmental Disaster, Civil Unrest, Political Uprising, Terrorist Activity, etc.
- STEP THREE **Take Action.** Exercise good judgment. Follow the advice / instruction of program staff or faculty on site. If you are alone at the time, try to safely remove yourself from the “danger zone” to a safer environment. In extreme cases, the US Consulate or Embassy may be a good option. In most cases, returning to your homestay family’s house may be the best bet. Those on short term programs should try to return to their hotel, hostel, B&B, etc. Remember to think of alternate transportation options you have available to you in that city.
- STEP FOUR **Get in touch.** Now that you are in a safer and more stable location, update others about your situation. Using a method of communication at your disposal, get in touch with your emergency contacts so they can help you. Have them assist you in finding what you need (medical care, transport, a lawyer, etc.)
1. Take care of yourself. While you are waiting for your contacts to assist you, or in case you cannot reach anyone to assist you, use your emergency kit. Take out the supplies you need to keep yourself healthy (bandages, food, etc). You may need additional / continuing medical care and / or personal / psychological counseling.
 2. Keep Trying. If you cannot get a hold of anyone to help you (because phone lines are down, you are trapped, etc) don't give up. Try alternate methods of communication and transportation until you are able to reach someone. If you need to move to another location, let others know and leave a written description of where you are going.
- STEP FIVE **Move to a more permanent location.** After you have removed yourself from any immediate threat, regrouped at a safer location, and get in touch with your emergency contacts, you may need to move to a more permanent location for treatment / assistance. Consider your transportation options and get yourself to the appropriate location (hospital, police station, embassy / consulate, contact's home, counseling center, university student center or their international office, etc.)

STEP SIX **Stay in touch.** Maintain contact and update your emergency contacts on your condition. It would be useful to have a "communication tree" (with others in your program) whereby your emergency contacts can collaborate to help you through the emergency situation

STEP SEVEN **Evaluate and revise your "personal emergency action plan."** After the emergency is over, and once your condition has stabilized, evaluate your plan and use what you've learned to revise it in case of future emergencies (Please provide feedback to Linfield's IPO about how other students might learn from your experience).

Stay Healthy and Safe While Abroad

We recommend that you have a complete physical, eye and dental examination 2-3 months prior to your program abroad. Check with your doctor (and with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control) regarding any inoculations you might need to protect yourself from infectious diseases endemic in the countries you will visit.

- **Check with the U.S. Department of State Website:** The first thing students should do before going abroad anywhere is to check with the U.S. Department of State's website <https://step.state.gov/step/> and register your travel plans. There you will find links to [Consular Information Sheets](#) which provides important information about your host country.
- **Travel Advisories, Alerts and Warnings:** The State Department issues both travel advisories, alerts and travel warnings. It releases travel alerts to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. The agency's travel warnings inform U.S. citizens about long-term conditions that make a country unstable or dangerous. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control issues travel health warnings to alert citizens to widespread, serious outbreaks of a disease or to other public health concerns. Linfield University does not have a blanket policy with respect to restricting travel for students and faculty based on State Department alerts, advisories and even warnings. We assess each situation on a case by case basis, gathering as much information as possible from staff at our partner institutions, US Consulates on site, the Overseas Security Advisory Council and other sources of information deemed appropriate and useful by Linfield. A decision to cancel or proceed with a particular program in the face of a State Department announcement of any kind will be made by University officials based upon a thorough examination of the situation at hand and comprehensive gathering of information from all government and non-governmental sources.
- **What to Know about Your Country:** Learn all you can about the health and safety issues of the countries you plan to visit. This includes reading about the cultural and political climate of those countries, as well as learning about how others view people from your country, race, ethnic group, religion, gender and sexual orientation.
- **Laws and Codes of Conduct:** Make yourself aware of both the rules and regulations of your host institution and country, and the local laws and customs of the cities and towns you will be visiting. Understand that you will not only have to conform to the legal system of the country you will be visiting, but also obey the codes of conduct required of program participants.
- **Infectious Diseases and Inoculations:** Find out about the infectious diseases endemic in countries to which you will be traveling by checking U.S. Centers for Disease Control

and get the appropriate shots, and take the appropriate medications with you if recommended by your doctor. Find out about any potential side effects of shots and medication that you may take.

- **Can You Drink the Water?** Find out if water is safe to drink in the countries to which you will be traveling. Make sure water bottles come sealed when you buy them. Remember that ice can also be unsafe, as well as the water you use to brush your teeth.
- **Physical Health and Insurance Coverage:** Take into serious consideration your own health issues when applying for a study abroad program, and make all your necessary health information available to the program's administrators so they can assist you with any special needs, or advise you on the risks you might face. When completing the health form, be truthful and upfront. Not disclosing information about your health or medication you are taking can lead to a dismissal from the program when such information is brought forward later in the process. Study abroad includes both physical and mental challenges for students.

All students on Linfield's study abroad programs (January Term and semester/year abroad) will have insurance coverage through a University approved plan/vendor. The cost of the coverage, during the duration of the program, will be included in your program fee.

- This policy covers medical needs while you are abroad as well as necessary evacuation (for medical or other contingencies as determined by the plan). You should also be aware that medical insurance coverage, if any, is extremely limited for anyone injured while engaging in any "extreme sports" (any kind of dangerous athletic endeavor such as bungee jumping, cliff diving, zip-line riding, etc., more broadly defined to include any activity which is not part of the university's current athletic program). Accordingly, you should be aware that Linfield does not condone such activities and strongly discourages anyone from engaging in any form of extreme sports while participating in a Linfield-administered program abroad.
- **Prescriptions:** Get a doctor's signed prescription for any medication you have to take abroad. Some prescriptions may need to be translated if you wish to fill them abroad. Include your glasses or contact lens prescription. Bring an extra pair of glasses and contact lens kits and paraphernalia.
- **Fitness and Exercise:** Try to get fit in the time you have before departing overseas. A healthy body can help you fight off illnesses and recover faster if you do get sick. Also, try to stay fit and exercise while abroad.
- **Walking:** Get a good pair of comfortable walking shoes. Without access to a car or public transportation abroad, you will have to do quite a bit of walking. Break in your shoes before you go.
- **Emergency Contacts:** Keep the staff at IPO and an emergency contact back home well informed of your whereabouts and activities and provide these people with copies of your important travel documents (i.e. passport, visa, plane itineraries, E-tickers, and prescriptions). And, let people around you (host university staff, homestay family hosts) know of your whereabouts during semester breaks and other long weekends, if you are traveling. Make sure they have your hotel and other travel information.
- **Air Travel:** When you travel by air, drink a lot of non-alcoholic fluids, stay away from caffeine, eat light, and stretch often to avoid jetlag. Many airlines are now required to show an in-flight video of stretching exercises you can do on the plane in order to avoid the potential formation of blood clots, which can be caused by cabin pressure and sitting for long periods of time.

- **Transportation:** Accidents involving in-country travel, whether by air, bus, train, taxi, car, etc., are a major cause of injury to students abroad. It is important to understand what the safe modes of travel are abroad.
 - **Bus:** Since it is the least expensive, travel by bus is often a very popular choice for students. Some may prefer to take the train instead. But, be cautious in making these selections. Your homestay hosts will know more about these kinds of transportation modes and can offer good advice in making informed choices.
 - **Train/Metro:** You may want to avoid traveling by train alone at night, particularly in more urban areas. In major cities especially, you will find the metro system (where available) to be the most convenient form of transportation to move about the city, although beware of pickpockets. Don't fall asleep on trains, buses or metro, especially if you have personal belongings (suitcases, backpacks, etc) around you.
 - **Air:** Air travel can be a good value. If you know of discount airfare websites, you can find tickets at reasonable prices.
 - **Cars (Driving):** Linfield University strongly discourages you from driving while you are on a study abroad program (regardless of whether it is Jan Term, semester or year abroad and regardless of whether you are familiar with the area). In countries where driving laws are significantly different than in the U.S., such as the UK or Hong Kong, Australia, Ireland where drivers travel on the left side of the road or in other countries where you would experience a completely different driving environment, driving will become more of a challenge and insurance coverage can be prohibitive....so, don't do it! If a driver is involved in a vehicle accident resulting in damages or injuries to another party, the driver may be detained by local authorities until a settlement is arranged with the injured party. Furthermore, depending upon the extent of damages or injuries to the other party, you may face charges filed by the country's judicial authorities.
- **Alcohol and Drugs:** Use and abuse of alcohol and drugs abroad can increase the risk of accident and injury. Many study abroad accidents and injuries are related to the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Violating drug laws abroad may result in very serious consequences. In some countries, being found guilty of violating drug laws can result in consequences as serious as the death penalty.
- **Culture Shock (and homesickness):** This is a much under-estimated and often ignored item among students traveling abroad to study. People often adopt the posture that it will never happen to them. It is real and it has "afflicted" even the most seasoned traveler. Take it seriously, recognize the symptoms and be informed of what you can do to overcome culture shock. And, look out for each other. This is widely discussed in your pre-departure orientation material....please review it.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

1. Linfield Public Safety 503-883-7233 (SAFE) (This is a 24-hour number.)
2. Shaik Ismail 503-883-2228, Office fax 503-883-2207 (Home:
503-434-7282) (Cell: 971-241-8986)
3. Michele Tomseth 503-883-2434, Office fax 503-883-2207
4. Deborah Herlocker-Freeman 503-883-2502, Office fax 503-883-2207
(Cell: 503-320-7182)
5. Counseling 503-883-2562
6. Campus Switchboard 503-883-2200 (M-F, 8am-5pm)
7. Jeff MacKay 503-883-2436 (Home: 503-472-2388)
(Cell: 503-560-4955)
8. Marie Schmidt 503-883-2222 (Cell: 503-250-0204)

It is highly recommended that you call Linfield University BEFORE calling the US Embassy at your site unless the situation, according to your judgment, calls for the Embassy to be contacted first. Even after the Embassy has been contacted, you are to call the first contact person on campus.

Travelers' First Aid Kit

*Check www.tsa.gov to see what can and cannot be taken on the plane.

- ACE bandages, Band-Aids
- adhesive tape
- aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen (for fever, muscle aches, or pain relief)
- anti-diarrhea medication (e.g., Immodium)
- antiseptic cream/ antibacterial ointment (e.g., Neosporin)
- antihistamine Benedryl / decongestant (for common cold symptoms)
- motion sickness remedy (e.g., Dramamine)
- hydrocortisone cream (for poison ivy, allergic reactions)
- antacid (Tums, Rolaids)
- Pepto Bismol
- cold tablets
- laxative
- cough syrup (**not in carry on**)
- sunscreen (**not in carry on**)
- insect repellent (containing DEET 30%-35%)
- aloe vera (**not in carry on**)
- alcohol wipes
- moleskin/ molefoam
- cold packs
- thermometer
- Q-tips
- eye cup and Visine
- gauze pads
- arm sling
- cotton balls
- dental floss
- flashlight
- first aid book
- scissors (**not in carry on**)
- Tweezers (**not in carry on**)
- pocket knife (**not in carry on**)
- syringes (**not in carry on**)
- glasses repair kit (**not in carry on**)

*A day or two before the flight, re-check www.tsa.gov for the most up-to-date regulations regarding packing and other flight related issues.

Some Useful Web Sites

1. **U.S. State Department:** [home page: www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
2. **U.S. State Department:** <http://www.state.gov/travel/> for the following information: Countries and Regions, International Issues, Services for Citizens Abroad, Travel Emergencies and Warnings, plus much more. Also check out <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html> for similar and further information from the State Department.
3. **Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** home page www.cdc.gov. This is a comprehensive web site that contains up-to-date information on health issues in the USA and around the world.
4. **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** Travelers' Health www.cdc.gov/travel. This section of the CDC web site contains information on health issues and inoculations needed for different countries around the world.
5. **Other Useful sites:**
Embassies and Consulates Worldwide: <http://www.embassyworld.org/>
The Center for Global Education:
<http://www.studentsabroad.com/handbook/introduction.php?country=General>

The **Department of State** has created a secure website where American citizens planning to travel overseas can **register on line with the U.S. Government**.

You can register with the U.S. Government on-line at:
<https://step.state.gov/step/>

This website will walk you through the registration process.