

Emergency Preparedness



The Issue

It's a wild world out there, constantly threatened by the likes of earthquakes, wildfires, tsunamis and political unrest. As global mobility professionals, we have both a legal and moral obligation to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of our relocating employees and their accompanying family members.



The Mobility Impact

The concepts of Emergency Preparedness and the broader “Duty of Care” have been trending recently in response to the many catastrophic incidents dominating the headlines; these are impossible to predict and control, and many mobility managers are stumped as to how to assure the safety of their relocating employees when they're out of arms reach and constantly moving. Further complicating matters, according to a survey by McKinsey, 58 percent of Americans report working remotely at least one day per week. The report also suggests that remote work could continue to increase with 87 percent of respondents indicating a strong desire for the chance to work remotely in a flexible arrangement.

Even when companies are aware of a remote work arrangement, too often, these employees will work across international borders and state lines, and employers have no way of keeping track of their whereabouts. This makes it that much harder to help keep them safe if natural disasters, political unrest, or other emergencies arise.

Emergency Preparedness



Client Impact

Employees have an obligation to be prepared for emergencies, but as the employer, you have a “Duty of Care”. The challenges are compounded in highly volatile, unpredictable, or rapidly changing situations and require rapid, effective decision-making and practical responses. For clarity's sake, we'll define Duty of Care as *the moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and well-being of your employees*, and an Emergency Preparedness Action Plan is the vehicle through which this Duty of Care can be exercised.



By the Numbers

While wars, pandemics, and earthquakes are still fairly rare, in 2023, the United States alone experienced **28** separate events that each resulted in some degree of damage to homes, roads and transit infrastructure. These events included winter storms, wildfires, droughts, heat waves, flooding, tornado outbreaks, tropical cyclones, and severe weather/damaging hail, all of which impacted power, communications, travel, and commerce for varying time periods.



Emergency Preparedness



Our Recommendations

Best practice Emergency Preparedness Action Plans include a clear framework, well-defined roles and responsibilities, employee pre-travel briefings, periodic reviews, and enough flexibility to allow them to work in all situations. **Oh, and don't forget a thorough readiness test!**

Emergency Preparedness Action Plan Best Practices:

- Establish clear roles & responsibilities
- Maintain accurate, up-to-date data and easy to reach personnel
- Collaborate with Corporate Travel Security
- Provide a checklist along with a list of important names and contact information
- Have a plan at the ready and test it
- Have backup communication strategies
- Have a method to get cash, supplies, and/or services to affected employee

Employee briefings should increase awareness and empower all stakeholders, not scare them - panic can derail the best plans. Therefore, actively **testing** your plan is imperative to ensure every detail is accounted for. This includes testing notification systems and response methods.

Communication systems are often impacted in an emergency, so contingencies for lost communication necessitate built-in redundancies and the ability to test these systems regularly.

For employees mid-relocation, we recommend:

- Conducting a comprehensive situation assessment (how many employees are impacted, where are they located, and are they all accounted for).
- Warning employees about potential delays in service delivery (i.e., HHG shipments, appraisals, mortgage processing, closing, etc.) and reassuring them that they will have extended time to get settled and financial support to cover resulting costs for the duration of the emergency and relocation.
- Providing emergency contact information.

Emergency Preparedness



The Bottom Line

An Emergency Preparedness Action Plan happens to be one of those things that are “better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it.” The good news is that if you're in the latter camp, there's no time like the present to enhance or develop your program. You'll earn your status as your company's *Duty of Care champion*, and even though we hope you'll never, ever need to use it, you'll be so glad you have it if you do!



Further Reading:

[Weichert SMARTRIP - Distributed Workforce Management Tool](#)

[Emergency Situations and Your Mobile Employees: Weichert Workforce Mobility](#)

[Developing an Emergency Response Plan \(Ready.gov\)](#)

[Business Emergency Plan: 7 Steps for Disaster Preparedness \(fundera.com\)](#)

External References:

“Americans are embracing flexible work—and they want more of it.” June 23, 2022 | Article | McKinsey

Weichert Workforce Mobility has prepared this information from the most current data available. However, the client is advised to consult with their own tax and legal counsel with regard to any interpretation of IRS regulations or subsequent changes in policy.

Looking for more information on this or any mobility topic?

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