INTRODUCTION

An organisation that has global business operations may need to send employees to work abroad, or establish permanent bases in other countries. In meeting these operational needs, the safety and health of employees, together with assets will need to be managed. This process may include:

- **How many employees** will need to work or travel abroad?
- **Travel arrangements** to and in the country.
- **Living in the country**, including lifestyle and culture.
- Finding **specialist support abroad**.
- Dealing with **language difficulties**.
- Learning about the **country's health and safety culture**.
- How **local H&S laws** compare to UK standards.
- Deciding **how H&S will be managed and by whom**.

INTERNATIONAL H&S POLICY

Health and safety standards vary between countries and regions. This is a significant challenge for multinational organisations that want to maintain operational standards. You can achieve consistency either by using a third-party accredited standard or by establishing an internal international standard within your organisation. Internal standards can follow one of two principles:

- Use UK health and safety standards, with additional, more stringent requirements where required.
- Use the standards of the country with the most stringent H&S requirements in which the organisation operates.

H&S MANAGEMENT

1 **Country Risk Assessment**	Some points to consider: The **international H&S policy** covers people, places and activities involved; **Risk profiles for staff** (and of their families, where relevant); **Political, medical and security risks** of the countries involved; **Infrastructure and contacts**; **Cultural awareness and training**; **Travel planning** and **vaccination schedule**; **Personal safety and security training**; **Communications** arrangements; **Accommodation and travel** within the country; **Contingency and emergency strategy and response**; **Debriefing strategy**.
2 **Staff Preparation**	The hazards of travelling or working abroad include: **language barrier**, the traveller's **unfamiliarity with the location, health risks**, **local customs**, **internal security** or **political instability**, and **transport.** Preparation for staff should include: individual **risk assessment**, **insurance cover**, **clothing** and luggage, **accommodation** and **medical and dental checks**.
3 **Keeping in Touch**	Consider how best to keep in touch with employees overseas. As a minimum you should be able to contact your staff at specific times, and they should be able to communicate with their base when they need to. Many countries do not have communication networks in outlying areas, although most cities have bole networks. Satellite phones are an alternative for remote areas.
4 **Health and Security**	**Health**. It's vital to consider appropriate **health protection measures** well in advance of setting up an organisation overseas, or at least two months ahead of a staff visit or posting. You may specialist medical advice on: local medical contacts, medical insurance, country health and vaccinations. **Security**. Brief staff on country-specific security issues. The FCO[1] and WHO[2] provide current information, including culture, crime, personal security and country resources staff can call upon.
5 **Local Travel**	**Plan in advance** how your staff are going to get around when they arrive. Driving in some countries can be particularly risky because of poor roads or a high crime rate. If your employees are going to drive themselves, give them information on local traffic laws and the state of the roads before they go. If you can, book hire cars and drivers in advance.
6 **Crisis Management**	Disruption to business can be caused by natural disasters, accidents, outbreaks of disease, political unrest, crime or economic instability and they can all lead to emergency situations. For your business to deal with a crisis effectively, you need to develop workable **strategies, policies** and **systems to minimise the impact.**

Further Information	[1]Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice [2]World Health Organisation (WHO) - http://www.who.int/ith/en/ IOSH - Safety Without Borders - Keeping your staff healthy and safe abroad. February 2012.