

Safety Tips for Travel

Participating in conventions is a major part of our professional lives today. A new city, a new hotel, new people to meet-all add up to a stimulating environment away from the routine of our normal lives. But, they may cause us to let down our guard and become careless about the usual precautions we follow at home. No city or town is exempt from the problem of crime. Because of the size and scope of the Annual Conference, we travel to large cities in the U.S. We have assembled the following tips from various publications to help you plan your trip and be more aware when traveling.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

Use a check list to plan your trip, do not rely on your memory.

Tell a neighbor or family member your departure and return dates and supply an itinerary with phone numbers where you can be reached in an emergency. Confirm arrival at your destination with this person and your office.

Stop deliveries to your home, or have a neighbor pick-up your mail and newspapers.

Make sure you can carry your own luggage and equipment easily. Don't become bogged down with baggage.

Put your business address on your luggage tags instead of your home.

Keep a list of the credit cards and identification you plan to take.

AT THE AIRPORT

Dress casually when traveling.

Handle your own possessions at all times, except when checking luggage with authorized personnel.

Never store valuables (cash, jewelry) in your luggage.

Carry as little baggage as possible and never leave your baggage or briefcase unattended.

Band your luggage as a safeguard. Place a strap or tie around luggage or a seal on the zipper. This can be a deterrent against pilferage.

Carry your purse in a carry-on bag to avoid being a target for theft.

Keep careful tabs on your tickets. Carry them in an inside pocket, not protruding from a jacket or bag.

Late night arrivals should consider using a shuttle service to get to your hotel. If picking up a rental car, do it the next morning.

TRANSPORTATION/TAKING A CAB

Secure buses, limousines and taxis at airport authorized pick-up points.

Check for a posted estimate of average fares near the taxi stand. If a dispatcher is present, ask for the appropriate fare and time frame for reaching your destination. Ask if taxis run on a flat rate or meter, and whether the meter should start at zero. At some airports, dispatchers give you a card outlining what charges to expect.

Check for notices posted inside the taxi regarding surcharges. If charges are not posted and the driver demands them, ask for written rules or proof that the costs are legitimate.

Ask for a signed receipt specifying pick-up and drop-off points when you get a cab. Drivers will be hesitant about circuitous routes if they know there will be a written record.

If the driver insists that you pay dubious charges, or if you encounter any problems, jot down the driver's name, physical description, and time of the ride. Also get the driver's license number, cab number, company name and phone number. These are usually posted on the seat back or dashboard. If you don't see them ask the driver.

Travel directly to and from the airport door to hotel door.

AT THE HOTEL

Have the desk clerk write down your room number instead of saying it aloud. Be careful not to repeat your number when talking to others.

Inquire if there is a safe in the guest room. If not, leave valuables in the hotel safe. Don't leave money or valuables in your room even for a short time.

Do not give your key to anyone, even the health club attendant.

IN YOUR ROOM

When arriving in your room, check entry door lock function, as well as the security bolt lock action. If the room is on the ground floor and has a balcony, check locks on access door and windows.

Check all areas of your room (bath, closet, etc.) before letting the bellman go.

When you leave your hotel room, put the do not disturb sign on the door. Also leave a radio or television set on to give the impression that someone is still in the room.

Keep the hotel room door open when hotel staff (bellman, room service) is in your room. Flip the deadbolt out to keep the door from closing.

Do not answer the door without verifying who it is. If a person claims to be a hotel employee, call the front desk and ask if someone is supposed to have access to your room.

Don't put your key down beside you at a restaurant, bar or poolside.

Always use any auxiliary locking devices when occupying or leaving your room. Draw the drapes. Keep your room key with you at all times.

Review the information and maps posted on the inside of your guest room door.

Familiarize yourself with the nearest emergency exits.

Routinely place the room key on a bedside table or chair so you can find it in darkness. Keep a small flashlight with the key for use in case of power failure or fire.

If you leave the room in an emergency, take the key with you. You may have to come back if exit routes are blocked.

IN THE ELEVATOR

Look into the elevator carefully before you enter. If you are uncertain of any occupant, wait for the next one. Stand away from the door when waiting alone.

Stand near the elevator control panel. If accosted push all the floor buttons.

Exit before the elevator door closes if a suspicious person joins you.

Look down the corridor for suspicious activity before exiting.

ON THE STREET

Try not to go out by yourself after dark. If you have to go in or out of the hotel late at night, use the main entrance or other entrance that offers decent illumination and a good view of the surroundings.

Never walk alone, especially after dark. If possible travel in groups.

Don't wear your name badge out of the convention center. Don't allow yourself to become vulnerable. Stay in public areas of the hotel or convention center. Stay close to groups of people.

Carry a fanny pack instead of a purse.

Dress appropriately. Try to avoid flashy clothes or jewelry that might attract attention.

Carry preprinted information with the name, address and telephone number of the hotel whenever you go out. This will assist you should you become lost or separated from your group.

Never display large amounts of cash when making purchases.

Carry travelers checks in place of cash whenever possible. Use travelers checks or credit cards for major purchases.

Ask for directions at the hotel. Don't hold a street map in public.

If you need directions, find an open business instead of asking someone on the street.

Walk "smart" when you leave the convention center or your hotel. Know your destination and the best way to get there.