

**RESCUE & SUPPORT THE HELPLESS
FOUNDATION
(RESH)**



**SECURITY AND RISK MITIGATION
MANUAL
2025**

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CHAPTER 1: RESH SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICIES

1.1 Abduction/Kidnapping

RESH maintains a strict policy of not paying ransom or providing goods under coercion. However, the organization will exhaust all other appropriate and lawful means to secure the safe and prompt release of a kidnapped staff member. This includes working closely with government entities, NGOs, and international partners. In such situations, the primary objective for the abducted individual is to survive by complying with captors' instructions and avoiding escape attempts. RESH is also committed to offering full support to the family members of the victim throughout the ordeal.

1.2 Alcohol

The unauthorized consumption, possession, distribution, or sale of alcohol on RESH premises is strictly forbidden. Additionally, employees are prohibited from reporting to work under the influence of alcohol. Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary actions, including possible termination. In some locations, stricter alcohol-related restrictions may be applied based on context

1.3 Armed Guards and Escorts

There may be circumstances where it is necessary to deploy guards to protect RESH residences, offices, storage areas, or vehicle parking spaces. Armed guards are only to be considered when there is a credible threat of violence against RESH personnel. When feasible, it is preferable to engage professional security firms rather than rely on local police or military forces. Armed escorts, including those from military units, will only be used as a last resort typically in areas experiencing widespread armed conflict or lawlessness.

1.4 LANDMINES, UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE (UXO) AND BOOBY TRAPS

If there is any risk of landmines, unexploded ordnance, or booby traps in an operational area, RESH policy is unequivocal: no staff shall enter or work in such locations unless they have received proper safety training specific to those hazards.

CHAPTER 2: ESSENTIAL STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Local Laws

RESH staff are expected to always comply with all local laws. Staff should avoid engaging in transactions or personal associations with individuals suspected of illegal activity, as this can damage RESH's reputation and increase risk to personnel operating in that environment.

2.2 Personal Conduct

Staff must act in a manner that upholds RESH's values and does not interfere with operations or damage the organization's image. Behavior that may be considered offensive or inappropriate to colleagues, donors, beneficiaries, vendors, or visitors is strictly prohibited. Employees must also avoid personal behaviors that compromise their safety, such as sleep deprivation, poor stress management, or the abuse of alcohol or drugs all of which may impair decision-making in critical situations.

2.3 Substance Abuse

The possession, use, sale, manufacture, or distribution of illegal or controlled substances on RESH property, in RESH vehicles, or while on duty, is strictly banned. Breaching this rule may lead to disciplinary measures, including termination. Staff using prescription medications must store them in original containers clearly labeled with the prescribing doctor's and patient's names.

2.4 Theft

No item or property is worth risking life for. If an RESH staff member is confronted and asked to surrender organizational property, such as vehicles or electronics, they must not resist.

CHAPTER 3: POLICIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Transportation

Traffic accidents are among the leading causes of injury and death for humanitarian workers. The RESH always mandates the use of seat belts both front and rear by all staff while traveling. All travelers must adhere to transportation safety protocols established by the Country Office (CO). Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, including a formal warning issued by the Country Director.

3.2 Weapons

RESH strictly prohibits all staff from carrying weapons or possessing ammunition during their assignments. Doing so not only conflicts with RESH's humanitarian mission but also puts the entire team at risk. All RESH offices and vehicles must be designated weapon-free zones.

3.3 Kidnapping and Hostage Taking

In the event of a hostage situation involving RESH personnel, the Country Office retains primary authority. It will lead all coordination efforts with local law enforcement and other relevant stakeholders to secure the individual's release.

3.4 Risk Levels

Risk assessments will be conducted and maintained by the Country Office, in consultation with the Country Security Officer. This process includes ongoing monitoring of political, social, environmental, and security-related developments that could impact RESH's operations. During periods of heightened risk or crisis, the Country Office, working with field teams and security officers, will determine whether programming should be suspended and whether staff relocation or evacuation is necessary.

3.5 Safety

The Country Office is responsible for developing and enforcing policies and procedures to ensure a safe and secure work environment. Area offices may be asked by the Country Director or Security Officer to review and recommend updates to contingency and security plans, as needed.

3.6 Work Environment

RESH is committed to fostering a professional work environment free of harassment, intimidation, and discrimination. Verbal or physical conduct that disrupts workflow or targets individuals based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other protected characteristics is strictly prohibited. Employees are encouraged to raise workplace safety and security concerns without fear of retaliation, and such concerns will be taken seriously by management.

CHAPTER 4: THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Evaluating the security context, recognizing potential risks, and responding appropriately are actions individuals perform daily, often subconsciously. A staff member might select a specific time or route to travel to avoid accidents or check locks at night to prevent theft. The Country Office (CO) can adopt a similar approach to assess safety and security risks and implement suitable protective measures. In many cases, the process is straightforward, such as purchasing bottled water when local sources are unsafe. However, in areas of instability or high disaster risk, the assessment process becomes more complex.

A safety and security assessment considers factors that may elevate the likelihood of incidents, including:

- ✓ Noncompliance with safety protocols for fire, health, and transportation
- ✓ Rising crime, proliferation of small arms, collapse of law and order, and economic hardship
- ✓ Perceptions of aid organizations as wealthy and easy targets
- ✓ Increased exposure to conflict zones by humanitarian workers
- ✓ Diminished neutrality and impartiality of aid organizations in the eyes of communities
- ✓ Politicization of humanitarian needs and misuse of aid resources for strategic gains
- ✓ The integration of humanitarian aid into the logistics of armed groups

4.1 Safety and Security Assessment Procedures

All RESH personnel must remain alert to political, economic, social, and military developments in areas where RESH operates. The CO bears primary responsibility for conducting safety and security assessments and establishing mitigation measures. A comprehensive assessment involves:

- ✓ Analyzing specific threats to RESH personnel in an area
- ✓ Identifying organizational vulnerabilities
- ✓ Defining indicators and thresholds to detect shifts in the security context
- ✓ Assigning an overall risk rating to each operational area

These assessments are not singular events but ongoing processes. As situations evolve sometimes unpredictably so do the risks to staff. Consequently, security measures must be continually reassessed and adapted.

Before launching any project, the CO and Country Security Officer must thoroughly research the area, identifying potential risks. Factors to examine include:

- ✓ Geographical/environmental risks, disease presence, and access to treatment
- ✓ Local political and economic conditions
- ✓ Cultural, religious, and traditional dynamics
- ✓ Demographics and ethnic composition, especially in complex emergencies
- ✓ Local governance structures and infrastructure development
- ✓ Community perceptions of RESH, other NGOs, and foreigners
- ✓ Nature of the emergency or crisis (e.g., conflict, natural disaster)

4.2 Threat Analysis

A threat represents the potential for harm to staff or damage to RESH assets. Effective security assessments require understanding both threats and vulnerabilities. Analyzing threats helps identify which security strategies will be most effective. The analysis answers four critical questions:

- **Who may wish to harm RESH?** This could include disgruntled former employees, bandits, terrorists, rebel fighters, or hostile military personnel.
- What types of threats exist?
 - Criminal threats driven by personal, financial, or malicious motives
 - Direct threats aimed specifically at RESH due to political or ideological reasons
 - Indirect threats where RESH is not the target but is still affected, such as by crossfire, landmines, natural disasters, or disease
- Why might humanitarian workers be targeted? Motivations include political affiliations, theft, kidnapping, civil unrest, retaliation, or opportunistic violence.
- How could an incident occur? Consider if armed attacks, fires, contaminated supplies, or natural disasters are common in the area.

Tools like checklists, interviews, and incident reports help answer these questions. Coordination with other NGOs and insights from local staff and embassy contacts also improve situational awareness.

4.3 Identifying Vulnerabilities

Vulnerability and measure to how exposed RESH is to potential threats. Even in high-risk environments, RESH's exposure can be minimized through strong security measures. A detailed vulnerability assessment helps determine readiness and resource needs. Use the same tools from threat analysis to examine:

- Where are weaknesses that may increase the likelihood of an attack? This can include physical locations, such as residences, guesthouses, roadways, warehouses, offices, and remote sites. Or they may be operations, such as program, logistics, and finance activities.
- When is the humanitarian organization most vulnerable to attacks? Vulnerability may increase during transport activities, relief distribution, pay periods, and periods of civil strife.

4.4 Developing Indicators

Indicators help detect changes in the safety environment, prompting updates to security measures. These indicators are context-specific and should be identified during assessments. Staff must be trained to recognize and report them. Common indicators of instability include:

Military Preparations	Local Expectation of Confrontation	Attitudes towards NGOs
Military build-ups or convoys	Families leaving the area	Harsh looks or hostile gestures
Military convoys on the road	Gathering of important possessions	Anti-NGO graffiti
Stockpiling of food and supplies	Extra buying/stockpiling of food and supplies	Light harassment of aid workers
Increased recruiting	Children staying close to home and parents	Open anger against NGOs
Departure of soldiers' families	Markets closed or hours reduced	Pilferage and theft by staff
Staffing checkpoints	People staying home at night	Vendors not selling to NGOs
Laying mines near military positions	Reduced movement on roads	Staff receiving threats

4.5 Area Risk Ratings

Using the completed assessments, the CO and Country Security Officer will assign risk levels to operational areas. These ratings consider not only the presence of threats, but also RESH's ability to respond, staff vulnerabilities, and mitigation strategies. For instance, a high risk of waterborne illness may be offset by strict bottled-water usage. Risk levels are reviewed regularly and adjusted as needed. Within the same country, different regions may have different ratings. While civil unrest and violence commonly drive high risk levels, epidemics or disasters can also increase risk.

4.6 Low Risk

These are locations that are generally stable with minimal political or social unrest. Crime levels are low, and any militant groups present have limited operational capability. However, threats such as natural disasters still exist. Basic security measures should always be maintained.

4.7 Moderate Risk

In these areas, some political, social, or economic instability may exist. Law enforcement and medical infrastructure may be weak. Armed groups may operate without directly threatening state stability. The area may be prone to disasters, conflict spillovers, or disease outbreaks. Enhanced precautions are necessary.

4.8 High Risk

High-risk regions are characterized by active insurgent or terrorist activity posing significant threats to national stability. Civil conflict may be ongoing, law enforcement may have collapsed, and anti-NGO sentiment could be prevalent. In such areas, strong and comprehensive security protocols are essential for operations to continue.

4.9 Severe Risk

These are extremely volatile zones where violence directly endangers aid workers. Safe operations are typically only possible with military assistance. Programs may need to be paused, with international staff evacuated and local staff provided with enhanced protective measures.

CHAPTER 5: SAFETY AND SECURITY PROCEDURES

Country Offices must first evaluate existing threats and vulnerabilities before implementing security measures. Once assessments are complete, appropriate standard safety protocols can be tailored and adjusted to minimize risks to personnel and equipment.

5.1 Cash Handling and Transfer

Cash storage, management, transfer, and distribution are key areas of vulnerability for both country and field offices. These activities pose security risks and must always follow strict policies and guidelines.

5.2 Cash Management

The Country Office is responsible for identifying a secure place to keep cash reserves, including emergency funds, and establishing a reliable method for fund transfers. Field offices should consult with financial and legal advisors, particularly local NGOs, to understand the use and reliability of local banking services, including electronic payment options and cash withdrawal limits.

5.3 Cash Transfer

Cash transfers are often needed for project implementation, local procurement, and salary payments. If professional courier services are unavailable, the following measures should be taken:

- ✓ Appoint two or three trusted staff to withdraw and carry cash. Split the amount among them and use separate containers and different routes.
- ✓ Keep travel times and routes confidential, disclosing them only when necessary.
- ✓ Use office vehicles, not public transport, and change vehicles and drivers regularly.
- ✓ Ensure a secure safe is ready at the destination.
- ✓ In the event of an attack, staff must not endanger their lives to protect cash.
- ✓ Avoid mentioning cash over radio; use coded language.
- ✓ Staff must **RESHrain** from discussing or bragging about cash transfer operations.

5.4 Communication

All operational areas must be equipped with suitable communication tools and have clear written communication procedures. Radios, mobile phones, and satellite phones should only be used with proper government approval and licensing.

5.4.1 Communication Systems

A sound communication setup might be as simple as using two reliable phone types or combining email and voice channels. In most cases, the Country Office will need to implement a specialized system tailored to the area's operational requirements, ensuring:

- ✓ Reliable communication with remote staff and travelers.
- ✓ Monitoring of remote site activities and rapid dissemination of security alerts.
- ✓ Coordination of emergency medical responses and evacuation protocols.

5.5 Incident Reporting

Prompt reporting of security incidents is critical for safeguarding staff. A robust incident reporting system helps the Country Office monitor evolving security dynamics. Reports should be made immediately via phone or radio, with written documentation submitted as soon as possible. For minor issues like theft or injury, a written report can be provided at a convenient time. The system must inspire staff confidence and guarantee fairness and confidentiality. All records should be securely stored and transported with senior staff during evacuations. RESH staff should assume all communications might be monitored and be cautious in reporting to protect sensitive information.

5.6 Incidents to Report

The following types of incidents should be reported as they may signal increasing security threats:

- ✓ Physical or sexual assaults, including attempts
- ✓ Theft of funds, goods, or equipment
- ✓ Vehicle accidents involving injury or death
- ✓ Arrests
- ✓ Kidnapping or attempts
- ✓ Extortion attempts
- ✓ Ambushes
- ✓ Credible threats or ongoing acts of hostility
- ✓ Bombings or major disruptions
- ✓ Any other relevant incidents

5.7 Information Security

The RESH Country Office has built a strong and transparent partnership with other agencies and government bodies, grounded in mutual trust. Nevertheless, staff must remain cautious

about the potential for information to be exploited by criminal groups or in times of instability. To mitigate this risk, the Country Office should adopt standard information security practices such as destroying financial documents securely or avoiding open conversations about staff deployments or movements. Establishing information protection as a routine practice helps prevent suspicion when heightened security is needed during emergencies or when handling sensitive data. It is essential that staff understand the reasons behind these procedures and receive the necessary training to follow them effectively.

5.8 Computer Data Back-Up

Regularly backing up computer files is essential to safeguard important historical data in case of emergencies such as fire, theft, or sudden staff evacuation. To maintain operational continuity after such incidents, the Country Office should ensure backups are performed consistently and stored in a secure off-site location. Ideally, backups should occur automatically at the end of each week. Additionally, one or two designated staff members should be responsible for taking the storage device off-site whenever the office is closed.

5.8.1 Security of Documents or Computer Records

Financial and personnel documents must be securely shredded preferably with a crosscut shredder before disposal. Records such as personnel files and Emergency Data Sheets should be stored in a locked location with limited access. To safeguard electronic data, strong passwords and other cybersecurity protocols must be implemented to block unauthorized access.

5.8.2 Personal Documentation

The Country Director holds the responsibility for securely maintaining security-related records for both national and international staff. Additionally, the Director must ensure that international staff and their families are properly registered with their respective embassies.

5.8.3 Record of Emergency Data

Every staff member is required to have a Record of Emergency Data (RED) on file. This document becomes vital during emergencies, as it contains key information such as medical conditions, next of kin, and religious considerations. The RED should also include a map indicating the staff member's home address and the locations of their primary and secondary next of kin. To protect sensitive information, the RED must be transported during any emergency office relocation. The form should be completed at the time of hiring and

reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary.

5.9 Personnel Issues

5.9.1 Leadership

Strong leadership, unity, and preparedness often offer more effective protection than physical barriers like locks or fences. Every staff member should stay alert to their personal safety and security environment and be proactive in addressing concerns when issues arise. Supervisors at RESH are expected to promote consistent and responsible adherence to all established safety and security protocols within the Country Office. In times of crisis or instability, anyone may be called upon to lead and should be prepared to:

- ✓ Establish and clearly communicate comprehensive safety and security protocols to all staff, with regular updates.
- ✓ Appoint a designated staff member, if needed, to monitor the security situation, conduct training, and ensure compliance with established safety standards.
- ✓ Maintain discretion and confidentiality when sharing sensitive information.

5.10 Background Checks

Where feasible, background checks should be performed on all prospective employees, in alignment with RESH's policies and core values. These checks can help reduce or prevent safety and security risks, for example, avoiding the recruitment of individuals with a history of serious offenses, such as a driver with past convictions for drunk driving. The Country Director (CD) is responsible for deciding whether such checks are necessary, depending on the context of the Country Office. Finally, a photograph should be taken, and the information listed on the individual's Record of Emergency Data should be confirmed. These basic steps may deter individuals who pose potential risks from applying to RESH.

5.11 Training Records

Maintaining accurate records of all safety and security training is essential. Each staff member's personnel file should include an up-to-date log of the training they have completed. This helps identify areas where additional training may be required and assess readiness for more advanced learning. The training record also serves as a permanent, transferable record of the staff member's preparedness and should be given to them upon leaving RESH, while a copy remains in their personnel file.

5.12 Safety and Security Planning

Regardless of the chosen security strategy, certain core safety and security measures are universally applicable across all regions and activities of a humanitarian organization. Documents like the Country Office Transportation Policy form part of the standard safety framework and should not be mistaken for contingency plans such as the Disaster Preparedness Plan (DPP) or the Evacuation Plan. Unlike contingency plans, which are activated in response to specific events, safety and security plans are always active. At the very least, the Country Office should create standard operating procedures to address critical security areas.

5.13 Travel and Security Precautions

Clearly document all travel and security measures currently enforced for each operational area.

5.13.1 Medical Emergency Response

Injuries and damage resulting from fires and electrical hazards occur more frequently than those caused by conflict or crime. Many of these incidents can be prevented through the use of basic safety practices and routine inspections. These form the basis of the Fire and Electrical Safety Plan, which should be reviewed and updated annually.

5.13.2 Fire and Electrical Safety

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5.13.3 Transportation Policies and Procedures

Traffic accidents are a leading cause of injury for humanitarian workers. Risk can be significantly reduced by adhering to speed limits, obeying traffic regulations, and consistently using seat belts. The Country Office must ensure strict adherence to its documented transportation policies and procedures.

5.13.4 Visitor Policies

The Country Office should establish and frequently revise its protocols, procedures, and any limitations regarding in-country visitors.

5.13.5 Incident Reporting Procedures

A clear process must be in place for reporting all safety and security-related incidents. This includes identifying the staff members responsible for handling such reports and the designated storage location for completed incident records.

5.14 Security Briefing and Training

All RESH Country Office personnel are required to receive security orientation, briefings, and training. These sessions should cover essential safety protocols, evacuation processes, and disaster preparedness. The designated Country Security Officer is tasked with conducting a comprehensive security briefing before a staff member begins their role. In cases where a pre-departure briefing is not feasible, the Country Office must ensure that proper training is delivered upon the staff member's arrival.

5.14.1 Security Training

Ongoing security training must be provided to all staff and properly documented. Typically included as part of onboarding, this training enhances awareness, reduces the risk of incidents, and equips staff with the confidence to respond effectively in emergencies. Core training topics that should be mandatory for all Country Office employees include:

- ✓ Basic personal safety
- ✓ First-aid, CPR, and emergency medical response
- ✓ Fire and electrical hazard safety
- ✓ Evacuation protocols
- ✓ Landmine and unexploded ordnance awareness (where applicable)

Additional training topics that may be relevant for staff and their families include:

- ✓ Defensive driving and basic vehicle care
 - ✓ Stress and trauma management
 - ✓ Anti-terrorism awareness
 - ✓ Communication protocols
 - ✓ Incident reporting procedures
-

CHAPTER 6: PERSONAL SAFETY & SECURITY

6.1 Situational Awareness

Being alert to your surroundings and recognizing potential threats is the first and most important step in avoiding safety or security incidents. Situational awareness simply means paying close attention to what is happening around you and noticing changes that may indicate risk. The Country Office can support new staff in developing this skill by compiling cultural and operational guidance into a single RESH reference document for orientation. This should include details about the country, the communities in which RESH operate, and information such as:

- ✓ Key population groups, including any that may be hostile or vulnerable.
- ✓ Host government sensitivities, policies, and capabilities.
- ✓ The relationship between local authorities and interest groups, and the efficiency of services like police, fire, and emergency response.
- ✓ Areas known for criminal activity or instability.
- ✓ Situations that are likely to trigger conflict or tension between factions.

6.2 Building Community Relations

Experienced field staff recognize the protective value of building trust and positive relationships with the local community. Community acceptance can act as a protective barrier, ensuring neighbors are more inclined to assist staff during a crisis. To strengthen these relationships:

- ✓ Avoid isolation by interacting regularly with neighbors and colleagues.
- ✓ Visit local gathering spots, cafes, and parks; include families when appropriate.
- ✓ Introduce yourself to local authorities and maintain cordial relations.
- ✓ Take part in community activities unrelated to work.

6.3 Criminal Activity

Criminal threats to aid workers have increased in recent years, taking forms such as armed assault, hijacking, or theft. Awareness of organized crime and preventive action are essential.

General safety measures include:

- ✓ Stay away from tourist areas known for criminal activity.
 - ✓ Keep valuables such as jewelry, cash, or keys out of sight in public.
 - ✓ Remain alert in crowded areas where pickpockets may operate in pairs using distraction.
-

- ✓ Carry bags close to your body and avoid keeping valuables inside; store them securely elsewhere.
- ✓ Carry only minimal cash and inexpensive items to hand over if threatened; split money and cards across multiple pockets or bags.

6.4 General Guidelines for Traveling

- ✓ Use hard-shell, lockable luggage with labels that do not display full details openly.
- ✓ Share your travel itinerary with a trusted person.
- ✓ Carry emergency contacts and addresses of reputable hotels along your route.
- ✓ Photocopy important documents like passports; carry the copy and keep another at home or the office. Use a plain cover for the original.
- ✓ Provide staff with laminated ID cards and visitors with emergency contact cards, showing English (or another UN language) on one side and the local language on the other.
- ✓ Keep a phone card or local coins for emergency calls.
- ✓ Stay close to other people in public spaces and on transport; keep your belongings secure.
- ✓ Use licensed taxis, when possible, agree on the fare in advance, and have your destination written in the local language.

6.5 Walking

Walking is often a safe and effective way to move around, fostering community interaction and reducing the image of detachment. If walking is appropriate in your area:

- ✓ Get advice on safe walking routes and carry a local map.
 - ✓ Be mindful of surroundings and avoid suspicious gatherings.
 - ✓ Walk with others where possible.
 - ✓ Avoid areas where attackers could hide, such as bushes or dark doorways.
 - ✓ Stick to busy, well-lit streets and avoid disputes.
 - ✓ Never accept rides from strangers.
 - ✓ Keep belongings secure and ready to deter snatch theft.
 - ✓ If approached suspiciously, change direction or cross the street; if followed, draw attention to yourself immediately.
-

6.6 Convoy Safety

Traveling in a convoy of two or more vehicles is often the safest option in conflict or high-crime areas. Multiple vehicles can deter attacks or provide support during breakdowns. Coordinating with other aid organizations or joining scheduled security force convoys may be feasible. The Country Office should review transportation security procedures to assess if convoy travel is advisable. In addition to general transportation safety guidelines provided elsewhere, convoy travelers should consider the following:

- ✓ Assign a leader for each vehicle and an overall convoy leader.
- ✓ Plan primary and alternate routes and verify them with local authorities.
- ✓ Leave your route and expected arrival times with someone at the office.
- ✓ Maintain radio contact between vehicles, especially the lead and rear, and agree on hand signals in case of radio failure.
- ✓ Use coded language when communicating routes.
- ✓ Keep a safe but visible distance between vehicles and follow agreed speeds.
- ✓ Inform authorities of movements if necessary.
- ✓ If a turnaround is needed, the last vehicle moves first, with others following when safe.

6.7 Additional Considerations for Women

Female RESH staff should never feel pressured to compromise their safety to prove themselves in the field. General safety guidelines apply equally to all, but women should also consider:

- Avoid listing first names in public directories or near doorbells.
- Raise an alarm immediately if in danger—shout, run, or use a vehicle horn.

6.8 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment, whether directed at men or women, is incompatible with a safe and respectful workplace and will not be tolerated. Women are most frequently targeted. Staff should be alert to unwanted attention or inappropriate behavior. The Country Office will display RESH's Sexual Harassment Guidelines and ensure staff are trained on them. All complaints will be investigated according to RESH policy.

6.9 Fire and Electrical Safety

Basic fire and electrical safety measures are critical but often neglected in offices and residences. Simple improvements, coupled with first-aid training, can protect staff. All staff

should follow common-sense safety precautions and take advantage of local or RESH-led training, involving family members where possible. Training should cover fire extinguishers, emergency exits, designated smoking areas, and safe electrical practices.

6.10 Offices and Residence Safety and Security

6.11 LOCKS AND KEYS

Secure locks and effective key management are fundamental to physical security. Inexpensive locks are easily defeated or circumvented, and even high-quality locks are ineffective if keys are not safeguarded from unauthorized access. Key guidelines for lock and key security include:

- ✓ Keep key numbers to a minimum and strictly control access.
- ✓ Store household and vehicle keys separately.
- ✓ Be cautious when providing keys to household staff.
- ✓ Prohibit unauthorized duplication and keep records of who has copies.
- ✓ Replace locks if keys are lost under suspicious circumstances.
- ✓ Never hide keys in obvious places like under mats.

6.12 Doors

- ✓ Use solid doors for main entry points and fit them with peepholes, safety chains, sturdy locks, and bolts. Install exterior lighting and intercoms where possible.
 - ✓ Keep doors always locked, even when at home.
 - ✓ Verify visitors before opening the door, using a window, peephole, or chain.
 - ✓ At night, visitors illuminate from outside without switching on indoor lights.
 - ✓ Consider internal steel doors to create “safe rooms” for emergencies in high-risk areas.
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CHAPTER 7: RESPONDING TO SAFETY AND SECURITY INCIDENTS

In the previous chapter, various ways to prevent or minimize most safety and security risks were outlined. However, even the best-prepared individuals can face sudden threats. Understanding the principles in this chapter can improve your chances of survival during dangerous encounters and provide a structured approach for responding effectively.

7.1 Fire

Fire should be considered a serious hazard when evaluating any work or living environment. The danger is particularly high in areas with limited firefighting infrastructure, buildings that are not designed with fire safety in mind, and low awareness or training in fire prevention. Fires in refugee camps, warehouses, or residential settings can cause devastating losses. Most fires start small and can be extinguished if addressed quickly. All RESH staff should undergo fire and electrical safety training, and every office, warehouse, and residence should be equipped with firefighting tools such as extinguishers, hoses, water containers, or sand buckets. Prevention through routine inspections and consistent training remains the most effective defense against fire.

7.2 Immediate Response to Fire

Staying calm is critical during a fire emergency. Taking the right actions can slow the spread, limit damage, and save lives. Key steps include:

- ✓ Raise the alarm — Shout for help, alert others, or activate fire alarms. Do not attempt to fight the fire until evacuation has begun.
 - ✓ Identify the source — Determine the fire's cause and choose the right extinguishing method. For electrical fires, shut off the power before attempting to put it out. Never risk personal safety in the process.
 - ✓ Monitor for re-ignition — If the fire is extinguished, keep watch until emergency responders arrive.
 - ✓ Evacuate if necessary — Close doors and windows if possible and ensure everyone leaves the building. Provide responders with any relevant details.
 - ✓ If clothing catches fire — Stop, Drop, Roll:
 - Stop — Avoid panicking and prevent movement that fuels the flames.
 - Drop — Get to the ground immediately. If assisting someone else, act without putting yourself at risk.
-

- Roll — Roll repeatedly to smother the flames, or use water, sand, or a blanket. Avoid using bare hands to beat out flames.
- ✓ Call for help and give first aid — Once safe, summon medical assistance and administer first aid as needed.

7.3 Electrical Shock

Electrical injuries are largely preventable. Faulty wiring, overloaded outlets, and unsafe modifications are common causes. Routine inspections and clear access to electrical shutoff points can reduce risks. If an electrical shock occurs:

- ✓ Call for assistance immediately.
- ✓ Cut off the power supply by switching off the main breaker or unplugging the source, if safe to do so.
- ✓ Do not touch the victim while they are in contact with the electrical source.
- ✓ Use a non-conductive object such as wood or rope to separate the victim from the current.
- ✓ Once safe, provide first aid or CPR as required and remain with the victim until professional help arrives.

7.4 Medical Emergencies

Every RESH Country Office should maintain a clear medical emergency plan for all staff, with special provisions for both national and international employees. In some cases, international staff may require evacuation to external medical facilities. Basic first aid training for staff and their families can significantly improve outcomes, especially where local emergency services are limited. When responding:

- ✓ Ensure your own safety first — do not become a second victim. Never enter dangerous areas such as minefields.
 - ✓ For electrical incidents, disconnect the power before touching the victim.
 - ✓ In water-related emergencies, remember:
 - Row — Approach by boat if possible.
 - Throw — Offer a rope or flotation device.
 - Go — Swim only as a last resort, with extreme caution.
 - ✓ In vehicle accidents, move to a safe location away from traffic hazards.
 - ✓ Remain aware of the behavior and intentions of bystanders; use an interpreter if needed.
-

- ✓ Be alert to potential criminal activity, including staged accidents.
- ✓ In many locations, the first responder is legally responsible for care until trained professionals arrive. All staff should understand local laws and protocols.

7.5 Sexual Assault

From the start of employment, female staff must be informed of the Country Office's procedures for handling sexual assault and harassment. These policies should be revisited regularly. Key facts include:

- ✓ Sexual assault can happen to anyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, or background. It is an act of violence and control.
- ✓ It remains one of the least reported crimes.
- ✓ Offenders often know their victims, and preventive measures can reduce vulnerability by avoiding isolation and unsafe situations.

If an assault occurs:

- ✓ Victims should avoid bathing or changing clothes to preserve evidence.
- ✓ Report the incident to the relevant authorities following CO procedures, even if it is difficult.
- ✓ Arrange for a supportive companion to accompany the victim to the hospital for medical care, including tests for sexually transmitted infections.
- ✓ Law enforcement will likely investigate, and the Country Director must ensure privacy, dignity, and legal rights are respected.
- ✓ RESH will offer and facilitate counseling services.
- ✓ The CO should complete an incident report, protecting the victim's identity. In some cases, sharing non-identifiable safety information with other NGOs can help prevent future incidents.

7.6 Confrontation, Robbery and Assault

Remain calm, respectful, and cooperative to avoid escalating a hostile situation. Armed attackers are most likely to use force if they feel threatened.

Guidelines:

- ✓ Stay polite, composed, and avoid showing fear or aggression.
 - ✓ Keep hands visible; move slowly and deliberately.
 - ✓ Comply with demands but offer nothing extra.
 - ✓ Never risk personal safety to protect property.
-

- ✓ Speak quietly and clearly.
- ✓ If in a group, limit conversation—especially in languages the assailant does not understand.

7.7 Car Hijackings

Carjackings are most common at checkpoints and intersections. Staff in high-risk areas must be trained to avoid danger zones and act decisively under threat. Conduct a full security assessment before vehicle operations in such areas.

Precautions Against Carjacking:

- ✓ Vary routes and travel times; avoid patterns.
- ✓ Avoid high-crime areas, choke points, and known threats.
- ✓ Maintain contact with other agencies to share route intelligence; consider convoy travel.
- ✓ Delay departure if unsure of route safety.
- ✓ Observe suspicious areas from a safe distance before proceeding.
- ✓ Mark vehicles appropriately for the operational area.

7.8 Gunfire

7.8.1 While on Foot

- ✓ Drop to the ground face-down; remain still.
- ✓ Stay calm—do not run.
- ✓ Identify the source and target of fire.
- ✓ Crawl to nearby cover (ditch, building) if possible.
- ✓ Follow the actions of others nearby.
- ✓ Leave only when it is safe or the firing stops; notify authorities.

7.8.2 Inside a building

- ✓ Move away from windows and doors.
- ✓ Take shelter in protected areas (bathroom, basement, stairwell, behind solid walls).
- ✓ Contact authorities if possible.

7.8.3 Inside a Vehicle

- ✓ Keep windows slightly open and radio volume low for situational awareness.
 - ✓ If fire is ahead but not directed at you, stop, reverse, and withdraw to safety via hard-surface roads.
-

- ✓ If source is unclear or from another direction, stop and exit vehicle for cover (unless in a mined area).
- ✓ Never shelter under the vehicle.

7.9 Ambush

An ambush is a sudden attack from a concealed position, leaving vehicles or convoys at a disadvantage. In high-risk areas, strict security measures and communications are essential. Prevention relies on careful route planning to avoid vulnerable points. No single tactic guarantees safety responses must be adapted to local conditions. For example, in some areas it may not be advisable to drive forward when attacked as the assailants may have placed their trap in that direction. As with any threat, RESH analysis will indicate potential vulnerabilities and protective measures to be implemented.

7.9.1 In Vehicle Ambush

Maintain controlled, maximum speed to reduce target vulnerability. If fire is from the front, divert onto a side street in urban areas or off to the side in rural areas (without leaving paved roads). Avoid reversing or turning around. If the driver is incapacitated or the vehicle disabled, exit using the vehicle for cover, then move to stronger protection such as ditches, rocks, or buildings.

7.9.2 Shelling

In most circumstances, a fully crafted ready-made action is generally put in place by offices that operates in an area that is prone to shelling, all country office staff and visitors are to be given special briefing and training before operating in the area. Some of these guidelines in shelling circumstances include:

- ✓ Enter the nearest cover immediately and remain until an “all clear” is given.
- ✓ If caught outside, seek the closest ditch or solid cover.
- ✓ When driving, move quickly out of the area; only stop if unavoidable, then take shelter away from the vehicle.

7.9.3 GRENADES

If a grenade lands nearby, act within seconds. Never attempt to pick up, throw, or kick it away. Do not run, grenade fuses are short, and the blast radius is about 30 meters. Lying flat offers better protection than running. Immediate actions:

- ✓ Raise the alarm, turn away from the grenade, and take one step.
-

- ✓ Drop face down, cross legs, keep them straight with feet toward the grenade, and place arms along the body. Avoid looking back.
- ✓ If no explosion occurs after 30 seconds, stay low, crawl to safety, and inform authorities. Do not return to the site or allow others to do so.

7.9.4 Bombings

Bomb or terrorist attacks can occur anywhere, often in crowded places like markets, bus stations, post offices, or airports. While targets may seem random, foreign interests are often at risk. RESH Country Offices should provide basic antiterrorism (AT) training to all staff and families annually. While AT training cannot prevent attacks, it builds confidence and equips personnel with a clear response framework.

7.10 Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Landmines are explosives triggered by contact or proximity, designed to damage or disable people or vehicles. UXO are munitions that failed to detonate and may explode with minimal disturbance. Any area with past conflict may contain landmines or UXO, particularly near defensive positions, military sites, transport routes, bridges, borders, and water sources.

7.10.1 Landmines

Used to block or restrict movement, landmines vary in size and design and may be placed manually or by air. They are classified as anti-personnel (AP) or anti-tank (AT), with AP mines being most common. They may be buried near the surface or placed above ground and can be triggered by pressure, tripwires, tilt rods, or remote detonation. Many are booby-trapped to prevent removal.

7.10.2 Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Former battle zones often contain UXO such as grenades, rockets, shells, bombs, and cluster munitions. Many have faulty fuses and may detonate from slight contact. Unexploded cluster munitions can act like landmines.

7.10.3 Booby Traps

Hidden lethal devices are often disguised as harmless objects or placed in significant buildings. Common items include office equipment, food supplies, or military gear. Avoid former army bases, government offices, schools, and health centers after conflict.

7.10.4 Kidnapping and Hostage Situations

Targets are often chosen after surveillance, with humanitarian workers at risk due to perceived wealth. While rare, incidents are increasing. RESH will not pay ransom but will use all available means to secure release and support families. In such cases, the Country Office (CO) must:

- ✓ Notify headquarters, local authorities, and the Country Security Officer.
- ✓ Confirm the hostage's identity and condition.
- ✓ Identify the perpetrators and their demands.
- ✓ Maintain communication with regional offices and relevant bodies.
- ✓ Increase security for remaining staff.
- ✓ Only the Country Director or delegate should speak to the media.

7.10.5 Health During Captivity

Consciously maintain physical and mental health. Stay physically healthy by eating all provided food and exercising regularly, if possible.

- ✓ Preserve mental health by adhering to personal values, focusing on future freedom, and requesting writing materials or books, if available.
- ✓ Maintain self-discipline with a routine and cleanliness standards. Gradually request hygiene items, books, or writing materials when appropriate.

7.10.6 Negotiation

The CO will oversee hostage release efforts. Victims should trust that release efforts are underway and avoid interfering. Unless in exceptional cases, hostages should not negotiate their own release or discuss potential organizational actions, as this may jeopardize negotiations. Hostages must resist believing they have been abandoned.

7.10.7 Release

Hostage release can be risky. During release, hostages should:

- ✓ Follow captors' orders promptly.
 - ✓ Avoid sudden or unexpected movements.
 - ✓ Stay vigilant and ready to act if issues arise.
 - ✓ Prepare for potential delays or setbacks.
-

7.8 Hostage Survival Checklist

To the extent possible, adhere to these guidelines:

- ✓ Stay calm, accept capture if unavoidable, and follow orders.
- ✓ Acknowledge captivity and mentally adjust to the situation.
- ✓ Inform captors of necessary medical needs.
- ✓ Eat provided food, regardless of taste.
- ✓ Mentally prepare for a potentially long captivity.
- ✓ Approach captors' information with cautious skepticism.
- ✓ Maintain a daily routine, including physical exercise.
- ✓ Track time accurately.
- ✓ Accept or request comforts like books, newspapers, or radio access.
- ✓ Maintain personal hygiene and request adequate washing/toilet facilities.
- ✓ Build rapport with captors and, if appropriate, share RESH's local work to gain respect.

DO NOTs:

- ✓ Avoid hostile, belligerent, or sullen behavior.
- ✓ RESHrain from discussing controversial topics like politics or religion.
- ✓ Do not become overly depressed or overly optimistic.
- ✓ Avoid physical violence or verbal abuse toward captors.

7.9 Safety and Security Assessment Checklist

This checklist offers guidelines for the Country Office or individuals to evaluate their safety and security conditions. It is not a comprehensive "how-to" list, and staff may have additional security suggestions. Measures suitable for one area may not apply elsewhere, and the Country Director is responsible for determining appropriate measures. Risk levels are denoted as: No mark = Low, * = Moderate, ** = High, *** = Severe. Measures for a given risk level also apply to higher levels (e.g., * includes Moderate, High, and Severe). Items marked (★) are mandatory for all areas. A Country Office may adopt higher-risk measures proactively to prepare for sudden threat changes.

After the self-assessment, the Country Director or designated person should prioritize corrective actions. Most issues can be resolved locally, but shortages in communication equipment or vehicle outfitting may require additional funding. Mandatory items must be addressed promptly, and safety discrepancies in offices or residences should be corrected before occupancy.

7.9.1 Transportation Checklist

- ✓ Seat belts/shoulder harnesses are worn by all passengers, front and rear.
 - ✓ Vehicles are equipped with necessary safety items.
 - ✓ Vehicles are inspected daily, with a designated person responsible for maintenance and addressing issues.
 - ✓ Vehicle logbooks are maintained, including checklists, maintenance schedules, trip tickets, communication protocols, documentation, and maps.
 - ✓ National and international staff carry valid travel documents, including driver's licenses; vehicles contain essential registration and documentation.
 - ✓ Drivers comply with local traffic laws and adjust speeds to conditions.
 - ✓ A clear policy on personal use of RESH vehicles during and after work hours, weekends, and holidays is established and communicated to all staff.
 - ✓ Motorcycle riders always wear helmets (recommended, though not mandatory, for Country Offices to enforce).
 - ✓ Vehicle fuel tanks are kept above half full when feasible.
 - ✓ Spare vehicle keys are securely stored in each Country Office.
 - ✓ Travelers inform others of their travel plans and destinations, with procedures for delayed arrivals.
 - ✓ A policy on unauthorized passengers, particularly soldiers, is established and briefed to all staff.
 - ✓ Where applicable, decals on vehicle doors or windows indicate no firearms are allowed.
 - ✓ Vehicle doors remain locked while driving, with windows opened minimally (no more than 5 cm).
 - ✓ Vehicles avoid heavily tinted windows that reduce visibility.
 - ✓ Staff operating vehicles can perform basic maintenance (e.g., tire changes, checking engine, brake, battery, and radiator fluids).
 - ✓ Vehicles display relevant radio frequencies and call signs for organizations in the area (UN, RESH Sub-offices, NGOs, etc.).
 - ✓ Vehicle accident procedures and reporting policies are established and briefed to staff.
 - ✓ An updated country or regional roadmap is displayed in the office.
-

- ✓ Policies and safety guidelines for air transport, including national military or civilian helicopter travel, are established and briefed to staff.
- Staff travel with at least one companion when possible.
- A radio is provided for daylight travel (night travel is discouraged).
- Radio check procedures are set for staff traveling outside the office area.
- ✓ Primary and alternate travel routes are chosen to avoid danger zones and ensure safety.
- ✓ Regular contact with local authorities is maintained for safety and security updates along routes.
- ✓ Vehicles carry extra water and fuel for out-of-area trips.
- ** Trip tickets or a vehicle tracking system are used to monitor vehicle movements.

7.9.2 Facility safety and security.

The following applies to RESH facilities (offices, residences, apartments, warehouses, and industrial spaces). Checklist items for Fire and Electrical Safety and Disaster Preparedness apply to all facilities at every risk level.

RESIDENCE

- ✓ Each residence has two exits (typically front and back doors).
 - ✓ All exterior doors and windows are secure and lockable from inside.
 - ✓ Basement and service area doors (laundry, storage, etc.) are lockable.
 - ✓ Ceiling/floor trapdoors and skylights are lockable.
 - ✓ Exterior entries allow viewing visitors without opening and have an interior-activated exterior light.
 - ✓ The area around the house/compound is free of hazards (e.g., holes, exposed wires).
 - ✓ Walled compounds have a lightweight ladder for emergency escape.
 - ✓ The house has clear views of approaches.
 - ✓ The yard has no hiding spots for intruders.
 - ✓ No access to the roof/compound from adjacent buildings.
 - ✓ Windows and exterior openings are screened against mosquitoes and vectors.
 - ✓ The area around the house has restricted pedestrian/vehicle access.
 - ✓ The yard/compound has a fence/wall, kept clear of overhanging branches or dense bushes.
 - ✓ Exterior lighting is installed, with tamper-proof fixtures and cables.
-

- ✓ Exterior light switches are accessible from inside the residence and at compound/yard entry.
- ✓ External electrical, gas, and telephone boxes have locked/tamper-proof covers.

7.9.3 Apartment Safety (Residence Checklist also applies)

- ✓ Preferably located on the first floor (to deter crime) and below the local fire brigade's equipment reach (typically under the seventh floor).
- ✓ Entryway has a guard or secure lock.
- ✓ Entryway is well-lit and maintained.
- ✓ A fire escape or alternative exit is available.
- ✓ Stairways and elevators, when present, are well-lit.

7.9.4 OFFICE SAFETY (Residence Checklist also applies)

- ✓ Evacuation procedures and routes are posted.
- ✓ A designated person secures all windows, doors, and entrances daily.
- ✓ A smoking area is designated with a proper cigarette disposal container and labelled trash bins.
- ✓ Electrical devices/cords are free of shock hazards; outlets are not overloaded.
- ✓ Sensitive documents are stored in a controlled-access area daily (political/security materials kept separate with restricted access).
- ✓ Office safes, if used, are floor-anchored and checked daily.
- ✓ The office layout ensures unescorted visitors remain under receptionist observation; visitors are logged and follow access control procedures.

** Critical equipment is protected from damage.

** Backup generators, if present, are separated from the main unit and protected with sandbags.

*** Fuel drums are sandbag-protected; flammable substances are stored remotely, ideally below ground.

7.9.5 Warehouse and Industrial Installations (Residence Checklist also applies)

- ✓ Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are installed, regularly checked, and accessible; staff are trained in fire procedures.
 - ✓ Ceiling/floor trapdoors and skylights are locked.
 - ✓ Exterior doors/windows are lockable and inspected daily.
 - ✓ A system ensures regular interior/exterior inspections.
-

7.9.6 Fire And Electrical Safety

- ✓ Fire extinguishers are appropriately placed.
- ✓ Smoke detectors are installed (minimum one per floor).
- ✓ A maintained first aid kit is available.
- ✓ Electrical cut-off is marked, unobstructed, and accessible; staff are trained to use it in emergencies.
- ✓ Electrical devices, outlets, and cords are free of shock hazards and in good repair.
- ✓ Window bars, if present, include one hinged set with an inside release for emergency exit.
- ✓ Floors above the first have an emergency escape method (e.g., rope/ladder with tested anchors for third floor and above).
- ✓ Flammable liquids are stored away from the house and other flammables; facilities are kept debris-free.
- ✓ water source reaches all compound areas; if unavailable, an external fire extinguisher is provided.
- ✓ Circuit boxes (inside/outside) are covered.
- ✓ Electrical wires/extension cords are not routed under carpets, walked on, or at risk of damage.

7.10 Disaster Preparedness

- ✓ Residences/offices comply with local building/safety codes.
 - ✓ Local disaster planning (e.g., floods, earthquakes) is considered.
 - ✓ Gas/electrical cut-off switches are marked; emergency lighting (flashlights or installed) is available.
 - ✓ Residencies have emergency items per Country Office policies.
 - ✓ Water tanks, if used, are inside the compound with locking lids if possible.
 - ✓ An electrical generator serves as a secondary power source if feasible.
 - ✓ A safe room is established, if possible, for crime, attack, or emergency use, supplied per the Disaster Preparedness Plan or Country Office emergency plan. Safe Room Requirements:
 - ✓ Solid metal door (not bars/grillwork).
 - ✓ Two exit methods, if feasible.
 - ✓ Peephole on doors for viewing.
 - ✓ Barred exterior windows with one hinged for emergency exit.
-

- ✓ Communication method (radio, cellular/satellite phone; landline as last resort) with Country Office/local authorities.
- ✓ Basement safe rooms are reinforced for disaster use.
- ✓ Sufficient food, water, and supplies for five days or more per Country Office guidance.
- ✓ For floors over two, a rope/ladder for emergency exit.

7.11 Communication Procedures

- ✓ Staff are trained on office communication equipment.
- ✓ Sensitive information (e.g., cash transfers) is never transmitted in plain language over radio.
- ✓ Written communication procedures and emergency contact info (phone numbers, frequencies, call signs) are posted in the office, vehicles, and carried by staff.
- ✓ Communication equipment (radios, cellular/satellite phones) has host government approval/licensing if required.
- ✓ Computer files are routinely backed up, with backups stored off-site.
- ✓ Use of other NGO/UN radio networks is coordinated if available.
- ✓ An office communication center is established with a defined equipment layout.

7.12 Evacuation Planning

- ✓ The CO Emergency Evacuation Plan is current and accessible.
- ✓ Staff know assembly areas, safe houses, and evacuation routes.
- ✓ A staff member is designated for evacuation planning/operations.
- ✓ A staff member is responsible for preparing/maintaining/updating the evacuee manifest.
- ✓ RESH policy on national staff evacuation or asylum requests is briefed to all staff.
- ✓ Procedures for international staff choosing to remain during evacuation are established and briefed.
- ✓ Procedures for national staff evacuation/emergency actions are set and briefed.
- ✓ A primary point of contact within the UN and international/national military (if applicable) for evacuation planning is identified.
- ✓ Assembly areas (primary/alternate), evacuation sites, and routes are verified and coordinated with UN, NGOs, and relevant agencies/military forces.

7.13 Administration/Personnel Training / Briefing

- ✓ New staff receive an orientation program.
- ✓ RESH Drugs and Alcohol policy is posted/available and briefed to all staff.
- ✓ Staff receive security training appropriate to their role/responsibility.
- ✓ Staff family members receive security training before assignment or upon arrival.
- ✓ Periodic safety/security training and briefings are conducted and recorded.
- ✓ New staff are briefed on the Country Office evacuation plan, Disaster Preparedness Plan, and security policies.
- ✓ Departing staff are debriefed.

7.14 Cash Handling and Transfer

- ✓ Secure methods for cash receipt, transfer, and storage are established; relevant staff are trained.
 - ✓ Designated staff are authorized/trained for cash withdrawal/transfer.
 - ✓ Cash is transported by at least two individuals, divided between them.
 - ✓ Travel routes/times are varied and shared only as needed.
 - ✓ In-city cash transport uses office vehicles, not public transport; vehicles/drivers are rotated if possible.
 - ✓ Cash transfers to remote sites use the quickest method to minimize vulnerability.
 - ✓ For large cash transfers to project sites, a contingency plan for travel delays and a secure overnight cash storage location are identified.
 - ✓ When using trains, cash-carrying staff secure a separate, locked compartment if possible.
 - ✓ A safe is available upon arrival at the destination.
 - ✓ Staff understand not to risk their lives to protect cash during an attack.
 - ✓ Staff use code words and avoid mentioning cash over radio.
-