

Going beyond traditional hotel safety and security



Safety and security have been at the forefront of most travel managers' minds in recent years. While terrorist incidents may have made safety and security a key focus, the reality is that travelers can face more common issues wherever they travel.

In the past year, there have been earthquakes in Los Angeles, protests in Hong Kong, bombings in Sri Lanka, and a hotel fire in Manila. Besides these larger, media-grabbing crises, your travelers also face individual threats from thieves and those who prey on single travelers.

This e-book provides tips for selecting lower risk accommodations, keeping travelers booking in program, and educating travelers on how to stay safe.

Importance of keeping travelers in channel

The reality is that companies of all sizes and levels of travel program maturity struggle with hotel attachment and duty of care.

To the right are examples of major incidents that occurred in 2018, ranging from a hotel fire in Harbin, China, to a terrorist incident in Paris, France. The companies with travelers in these areas during the incidents recorded low levels of hotel attachment.

As a result, 3,054 travelers were either more difficult to track or completely invisible to their companies, limiting the assistance travel managers could provide.

In 2018, CWT recorded 372 total crises, and a total of 4 million travelers* who could not be tracked or located by their companies. This doesn't even include countries with extreme risk levels like Cameroon, Nigeria, Egypt and Ukraine.

City and Country	Type of Incident	Hotel attachment in city during incident*	Travelers at risk
Harbin, China	Hotel fire	10%	216
Strasbourg, France	Terrorist attack	9%	80
Melbourne, Australia	Terrorist attack	64%	665
Paris, France	Terrorist attack	28%	1,601
Manila, Philippines	Hotel Fire	39%	492

Communicating the safety benefits of booking hotels within your travel program

No program can prevent all incidents from happening to employees, but you can make sure travelers know that when they are compliant they benefit from:

- Proactive tips before traveling to their destination
- Early danger warnings (CWT alerts can appear sooner than news alerts)
- Timely advice on how best to act during a crisis
- Help rebooking flights or hotels
- Help with early returns



How Steelcase educates travelers on safety

Steelcase Inc. is a multinational producer of architecture, furniture and technology with 5,000 travelers and 164 preferred hotels.

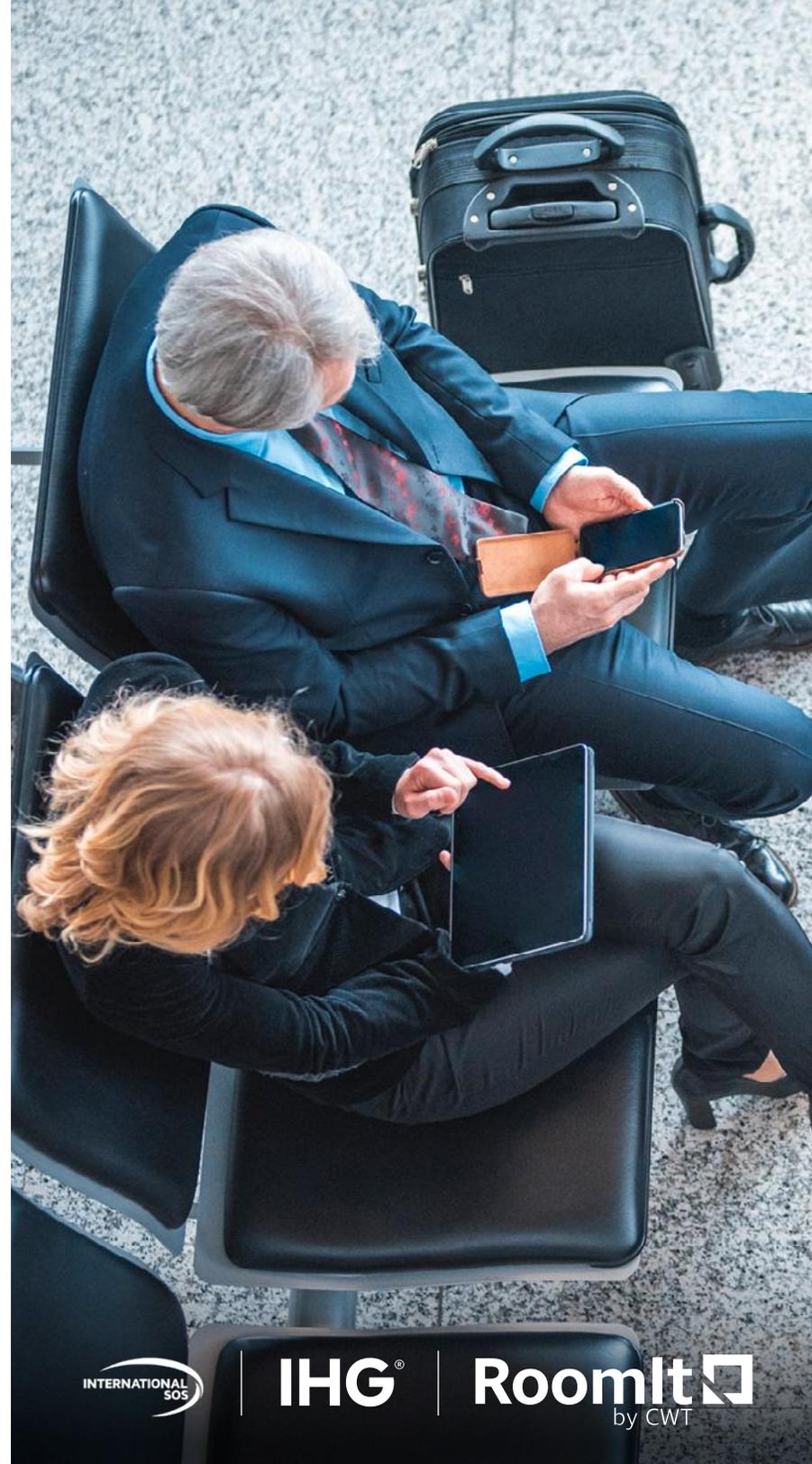
Traveler experience, including traveler safety, has been the most important program goal for Steelcase. Learn how Karen Cook, Global Travel & Expense Manager, educates employees about the importance of travel safety.

New travelers

- Mandatory travel course, which includes safety tips and teaches how to use tools
- Four travel program-related emails, with information and additional travel tips
- Are advised to download the International SOS app

Additional safety communications

- The team holds “travel talks” (like lunch and learns), which are open to all employees
- Resources are made available on an internal website
- The team routinely blogs about safety tips
- They encourage risk minimizing preparations before travel



Safety considerations when selecting a hotel

You may feel the RFP questions addressing physical safety and emergency protocols are a sufficient way of understanding security risks at a hotel. The reality is these generally don't go far enough.

In addition to using the CWT Solutions Group safety questionnaire, Karen Cook recommends walk-throughs and asking local employees for feedback.

Matthew Bradley, Regional Security Director Americas, International SOS, tells us that location is one of the most important and most overlooked elements of hotel security.

Since you cannot visit all the hotels in your program, consider using agency or third-party safety tools to at least assess the hotel's location.

You should also evaluate a hotel's location beyond country and city risk levels, because a hotel may be in a low-risk city yet in a high risk neighborhood.

"Location matters. Assess the risk of the neighborhood of the hotel in addition to the physical characteristics of the hotel."

Matthew Bradley

*Regional Security Director Americas,
International SOS*

Safety considerations when selecting a hotel (continued)

- Is the front door monitored 24/7?
- Do all doors leading to the outside have access control?
- Do adjoining rooms have metal plates between them?
- Have door locks been updated with a secondary locking device?
 - Dead bolts aren't enough.
- Are staff subjected to criminal background checks?
- Are there surveillance cameras throughout the common areas and property?
- Are there security fences?
- Is there a dedicated security staff?
- Do they have protocols for assaults, theft and fires?

"IHG and the owners of its branded hotels recognize the importance of the safety of all guests and visitors, and IHG's safety management system is continuously monitored and reviewed to take into account the expectations of guests and business accounts; our owner's investments; and changes in the safety and security environment. "

Bob Leon

*Director of Safety & Security Americas Region,
IHG*

Even trusted brands can pose risks

When we asked travelers how safety concerns affect their behavior, 50% replied that they only book trusted hotel brands.*

Like shopping malls and places of worship, hotels are considered a “soft” target for terrorists since they contain a lot of people and lower levels of security. In most cases trusted brands are safe, but in some situations they can also be bigger targets.

“Popular or well-known hotels may be a target in countries where terrorism is a risk. Ask your travel risk provider for any threat information before selecting your hotel.”

Matthew Bradley

*Regional Security Director Americas,
International SOS*

Verifying safety of hotels in your program

One of the most valuable assessments of hotel security and general safety comes directly from your travelers by way of hotel reviews. In fact, more than a third of business travelers will only book hotels that have good reviews.*

It's time to start thinking like your travelers. Using reviews in conjunction with your security tools can provide a more thorough understanding of travel threats.

Use the International SOS tools to locate countries with high and medium risk levels, drill down into neighborhood level, and then refer to hotel reviews to get more information from a property level.

If an accumulation of reviews express safety concerns for a particular property, it may be time to investigate. You can ask a local colleague to walk through the hotel, and if the findings are corroborated, you can do a walkthrough as well.

During your investigation, it could also be a good idea to set up automatic alerts that notify travelers of potential concerns. Should you confirm the safety concerns at a property, you can block the hotel from appearing in your corporate booking tools.



General safety tips for travelers

To help your employees stay safe, you can share a few of these hotel tips:

- Request a room away from the lobby or public areas
- Stay on a mid-level floor between three and seven. Lower floors are less safe; higher floors pose a greater risk during a fire
- Ask the front desk representative to write your room number down instead of saying it aloud. If spoken, request a new room
- Check that the locks on doors and windows work inside your room and keep the deadbolt locked at all times
- Hang up the "Do Not Disturb" sign, or leave lights and TV on to prevent theft



Tips for female travelers

It's always important to provide safety tips to travelers, but, unfortunately, female travelers do face greater risks.

Here are some tips for female travelers:

- Wear conservative clothing and avoid wearing expensive designer brands
- After ordering room service, do not leave a single wine glass outside your room – this can indicate a single female occupant
- Learn local customs regarding makeup, dress length, and interactions with men
- Move around with your group, or if alone, use trusted ground transportation
- Inspect the entire hotel room, closets included, with the door open
- Do not open doors to any unexpected guests
- Never use unlicensed taxis
- Arrange transportation from trusted providers

[Click here for safety tips you can share with all your travelers.](#)



How Steelcase handled a security incident

A hotel staff member entered a traveler's room at night.

Response

Instead of keeping this incident in the dark, Karen and her team responded directly and openly by:

- Contacting the hotel and eventually blacklisting it from their booking tools
- Launching an annual travel safety awareness month in which they:
 - Hold live safety demonstrations
 - Raise safety awareness
- Had employees blog about their own stories
- Ordered doorstops that they hand out to employees

“Educating employees about travel safety has to be done on an ongoing basis, and with the improvements to safety tools and reporting over the last few years, there are many preventative measures travel managers can take too.”

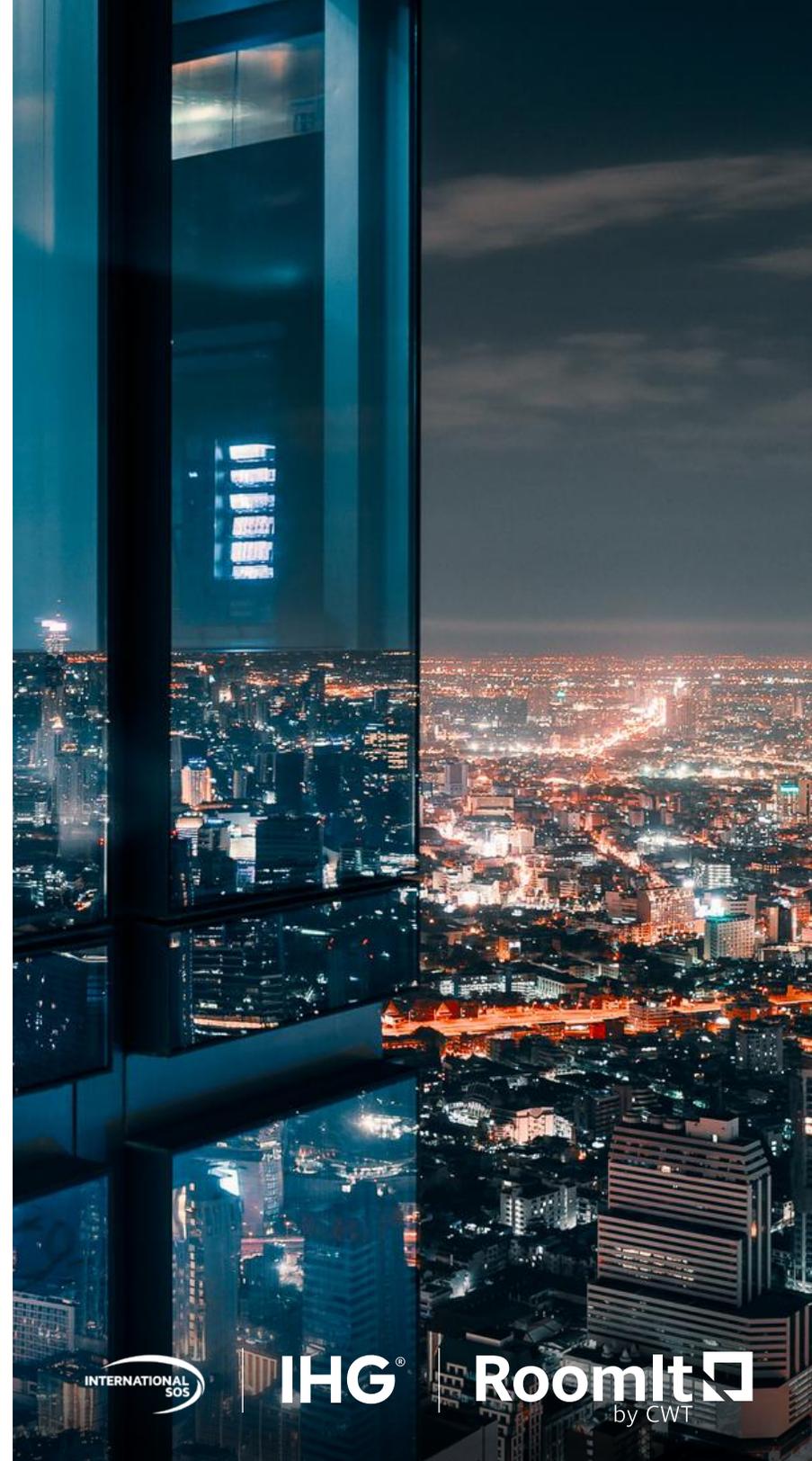
Karen Cook

Global Travel & Expense Manager

Conclusion

Hotel safety goes well beyond getting answers to the traditional questions about the physical security of a hotel.

Your ability to keep travelers safe depends heavily upon your ability to keep them booking in channel and educating them about how to handle security situations regularly.





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