

## **Rescue and Recovery Operations**

Please if you only read one sentence then read this...Report it to the U.S. State Department or to your embassy as soon as you can!

### **Rescue Operations**

**There are several types of rescue operations, but I will only discuss three: Lost person, kidnapped person/s and deceased person.**

#### **Lost Person**

With a lost person, the keys to their survival are their level of training, maturity and common sense. So the basic rule of thumb is the more remote the location the more intensive the traveler's training. Remember you want your travelers to survive and thrive in order to accomplish their mission or objectives. SOS beacons are cheap compared to mounting a rescue expedition in a foreign country.

1. The moment a person becomes missing the management team has to be notified and they have to send the family liaison person to the traveler's family's home. Whether the organization's leadership is strong enough or not to handle a crisis is now a moot point as you are now in an organization ending crisis.

2. The more remote the area for the travelers the more important SOS satellite beacons become. It is best to invest a couple of hundred dollars upfront and get a beacon that also reports back its location in case the traveler is deceased. Normally to hire a professional search and rescue team, it's around \$150,000 plus all expenses (travel, hotel, meals, transportation, special equipment, licenses, government fees, interpreters, guides, local informants, etc..) this is just to hire a search and rescue team, transport them overseas, and for two weeks of searching and the return trip. Factor in the parent organization's business interests with security teams and on the ground management and it becomes extremely expensive. Plus the more important the person is to the organization then the bigger the in country logistical footprint.

#### **Kidnapped Person or Persons**

Normally, a traveler just vanishes and 12 to 24 hours later a ransom demand is called into their home. There is panic as the family tries to find someone interested enough to take their phone call for help. Eventually the F.B.I. is contacted and they start an investigation, while the kidnappers demand a ransom now. Most organizations are weak and don't want to get involved until the family whips up a media storm which damages the organization's reputation and shortens many manager's careers. By then body parts like fingers and ears are arriving in the mail. Nobody wants to be in this situation so get the kidnap and ransom insurance!

1. Once your traveler becomes a captive, go ahead and rule out a tactical rescue as the odds are totally stacked against your efforts. You won't know the basics, like who to trust, how to find your people, and if the police were involved in the crime. All of this equals a possible trap with even more people's lives at risk, so go ahead and rule out a self-initiated rescue. This is why you have Kidnap and Ransom Insurance so the professionals can get your person back alive. Not to mention that someone in your organization could be working with the kidnappers so let the professionals deal with the kidnappers and make your goal to do exactly as the professionals tell you to do. At this point "who did what" is not important only getting the people back alive is.
2. Here again the family liaison person will have to work daily with the family and there may need to be several people supporting the family. Many times the kidnappers will rattle the organization by calling the hostage's family and their friends just to overload the organization into paying more and paying quicker. Updates to the family are critical so they don't start calling the media and further distract the organization. The longer it goes on the worst it becomes for everybody.
3. Travelers need to be trained to give a special organization phone number that has a recording machine on it to the hostage takers or kidnappers. This way the call can be recorded for law enforcement and other professionals to use. Families of the travelers need a clear set of instructions and a rehearsal of who to contact in case they receive a ransom call. Travelers need to be thoroughly trained on how to avoid being captured, how to survive being captured, how to aid the rescue efforts and if possible how to survive an escape (which hardly ever happens).
4. At a bare minimum the travelers need to understand that they will be beaten up at least twice, once when they are captured and once when they arrive at their holding location. Beatings to give out the location of other travelers, in country contacts and for anything else are extra and often!
5. In a perfect world the captured traveler would hold out for at least an hour, but with technology and enhanced interrogation techniques about 15 minutes is all you can really hope for. So the travelers will need to be well connected to each other and quickly notice when someone is missing and to report it to everyone immediately, otherwise the whole team can be captured.
6. Hostages will be asked to renounce their faith, make negative statements about their mission, the organization and their country at the very least. Your captors will push you until you break because that's what they do. You have to be true to your faith, because once you renounced your faith they kill you. Normally they get you to accept a piece of gum, then something to drink, then eat, and then build up the rapport from there and the next thing you know you are renouncing your country, selling out your friends in hiding and renouncing your faith. Remember the longer you hold out and don't accept favors the further away your friends can get. For you interrogators, you know that getting a stressed out captive to accept a cigarette or alcohol is a big win!

## Deceased Person

**Heart attacks:** Normally they tend to happen the morning after the travelers arrive, the concept is the stress of traveling combined with not moving around much during the flight and poor physical conditioning cause a heart attack. By rooming people together it gives the heart attack victim a chance for survival as opposed to being in a room by themselves.

**Suicides:** Tend to occur at the beginning and end of a mission as that is when the stress is the highest. Having a mature coworker or battle buddy with people helps to reduce the chances of a person hurting themselves. So it's very important that people work in cohesive teams. 90% of the time it is very obvious that something is wrong with the person so evacuate them as quickly as possible and send a strong and mature person with them to escort them home. The other 10% of suicides happen with very little warning, like a person drinking then jumping off a roof, it's really spur of the moment stuff. So select mature people and have everybody work in a team.

**Accidents:** Hotel fires, auto accidents, electrocution from faulty wiring, stepping out into traffic, slips, trips and falls in the hotel or at the destination are the next category of fatal accidents. The term "failure to anticipate" the consequences of their actions falls into this category. 90% of the time either prescription or illegal drugs and or alcohol is a contributing factor.

**Hostile Action by a Bad Guy:** These situations range from random shootings to very professional assassinations, botched kidnappings, beheadings, mass murder, bombings, with all sorts of improvised explosive devices being used. The goal is to keep the living alive and recover the dead when the situation is safe.

**Travel Accidents:** Taxi wrecks, Bus wrecks, train wrecks, and plane crashes also need to be considered. Using basic risk management, have the group travel in two chinks (a military term for a group that is flying) for example one chink has the leader and the other chink has the assistant leader, medical support is divided up between the chinks and the same with essential gear.

**Return Home Medical Problems:** Any medical conditions picked up while traveling like an illness or made worse by traveling like a chronic condition, to untended injuries fall into this category.

## Lessons Learned

1. The goal of any operation is to limit future harm or losses to the remaining travelers and any other follow on rescue and recovery personnel. So remember to keep the living alive!
2. Normally the circumstances for rescue or recovery are very complex and very stressful, so be prepared and rehearse what needs to happen with both the travelers and the management team and with upper management. The goal is to build a trained and cohesive traveling and management team that is well rehearsed.

3. In any bad situation there will be many moving parts like hotels, flights, medical evacuations, meals, and such so be prepared beforehand with cash reserves and all the different types of insurance that the travelers may need.

4. Emotions will be running high for the travelers, the management team and for upper management. Some people will see this crisis as an opportunity to take charge of the mission so expect crazy things to happen like internal sabotage, management backstabbing and for crazy egos to become unleashed. This is why the traveler's team leader needs funding approval or a credit card to just load up the travelers and go home, in case management gets really crazy with their demands. (I've been there!) Remember management isn't risking their lives but the travelers are risking theirs, so no stupid stuff!

5. If you have a well thought out plan and the families have been thoroughly trained in how to use the plan and how it will work the families are more cooperative.

**Warning:** If you feel that the family won't cooperate with the organization during a crisis situation then don't take the traveler.

**Warning:** If you don't have a plan expect the family to fill your leadership void and make matters worse for any travelers still on the ground and for your organization.

If you don't have a plan and didn't rehearse it with the family, expect someone from the family, with their own agenda, to grab the media spotlight. The first thing the family will be asked on live television is for the names of the remaining travelers, their flight and hotel information and the other traveler's family's phone numbers and addresses. As these are the normal follow up questions that the media will be asking. So declare a media blackout by members of your organization. 90% of your employees will respect and follow your media directives, but there will always be 10% that either didn't get the directive or they choose not to follow it for personal gain. Your employees need to know that the penalty for disobeying a media blackout directive is immediate termination, followed by civil litigation as most likely your company's reputation will be damaged in the process, not to mention the other traveler's lives will be at risk too.

It is more news worthy to get a first-hand account of a kidnapping than to stand on a lawn waiting for someone's "know it all" brother to ramble on about being in control. Don't forget to tell the travelers not to respond to media questions if something happens. This is why you need to rehearse and use contingency plans. Contingency plans are designed to protect the travelers and the organization. This is why your travelers need Kidnap and Ransom Insurance, let the professionals work the issues and get your travelers back home alive.

**REMINDER!** Please don't let some ego driven person take charge and get someone permanently injured or killed just to feed their ego about being in charge. You need experienced professionals to manage this kind of crisis for you, so please get Kidnap and Ransom Insurance!