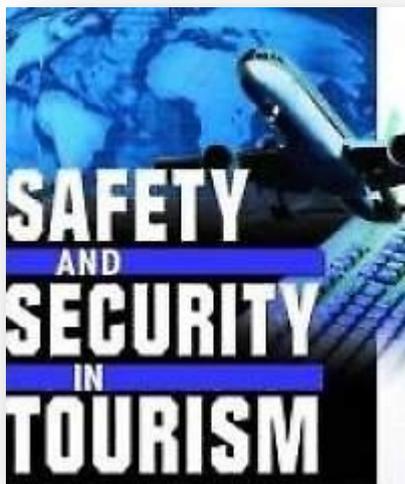




## The Importance of Tourism Incident Reporting



### Introduction

Since the re-launch of the Tourism Safety Initiative (TSI) about three months ago a great deal has been said about the need for proper incident reporting.

The TSI Strategic Plan for 2015-2017 then also sets an incremental target of 5% per month as to an increase in reporting that is aimed for.

Any such initiative has of course to be approached with caution, lest it create the wrong impression. Firstly, the figure of 5% is an arbitrary figure based on present guestimates that we at present do not get even close to that reported to the TSI. Secondly, one should of course ensure that better reporting does not create the impression that there are more incidents taking place! We will continuously be on the lookout to address such sensitivities.

But at some stage we have to level the playing field. Bank, ATM and cash-in-transit crimes, as well as fraud incidents that take place within that industry are ALL captured at SABRIC (SA Banking Risk Information Centre). The same goes for Post Office

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robberies (to Post Office Head Office), shopping centre robberies (Consumer Goods Council Safety Initiative), and fuel station robberies (Petroleum Safety Initiative), to name but a few examples.

Yet the tourism industry apparently does not consider reporting of incidents to be a requirement. This paper explores the needs for, and uses of safety and security incident information.

## Aim

To present an overview of the need for tourism safety and security incident information reporting.

## Safety and Security Risks Defined

ISO 31000 defines a risk as “the effect of uncertainty on objectives”. Safety and security are two closely related terms. Generally, safety is seen as a wider concept and deals especially with issues related to the environment and health. This is also sometimes known as recreational safety. This would include everything from disease, accidents, encounters with wild animals, fires, and the normal trips-and-slips. Interestingly, a conversation with the SATIB Critical Incident Management Services reveals that falls and slips account for the majority of incidents reported to them for

which assistance is sought. Importantly - they could only make this determination once they had a mature database in place. Before that time they had a completely different perception of what the demands on their resources would be!

Security risks are generally seen to be related more to crime issues, ranging from fraud, extortion, to aggravated robbery and murder - see [www.tourismsafety.co.za](http://www.tourismsafety.co.za) for a link to the SAPS which gives the proper definitions of all crime types.

So when applying the ISO 31000 definition to the tourism safety and security environment one could argue that “**Tourism risk is the effect of uncertainty on safety and security objectives**”.

*“Tourism risk is the effect of uncertainty on safety and security objectives in the industry”*

The key term here is “uncertainty”. Any risk management plan attempts to reduce uncertainty as far as is possible, and if it cannot be reduced, then to treat it in another way. Risk treatment options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The ways in which risks can be treated are as follows:

- Transfer - sharing the risk with another party (including contracts and risk financing).

- Avoid - avoiding the risk by deciding not to start or continue the activity that gives rise to the risk, or by removing the risk source.
- Mitigate - changing the consequence or the impact.
- Accept - retaining the risk by informed decision, or by taking or increasing the risk by pursuing an opportunity.

What should be clear though is that making an informed decision on risk treatment can only be done based on good information, or else it becomes a gamble, i.e. a game of luck.

## **T**he Need for Risk Information

The traditional TSI risks have been mainly focused on security risks. Going forward we will have to consider whether this is the correct focus. But before embarking on a discussion of why the need for risk information, let us first look at the traditional arguments that oppose sharing such information.

- **“It will compromise my business”**. In 2002 when SABRIC was started by *inter alia* yours truly as the GM Crime Risk Information, we had to face pretty much the same argument. It was only by showing that crime is a non-competitive issue, and by ensuring that the various banks’ information was not compromised,

i.e. by creating trust, that we could eventually break through this barrier. Today SABRIC is probably the model in the country of information sharing and preventive crime risk information product provision.

- **“It will compromise the industry”**. True, this is a possibility. But at present one could argue that the industry is anyhow being compromised by often incorrect perceptions of crime in South Africa. Why then would the WEF Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2015 list SA 119<sup>th</sup> out of 140 countries in 2015 when it comes to safety and security? The WEF cites this as *“one of the weaknesses that has brought down the country’s overall ranking.”* Hardly a vote of confidence. Will it not be better to rather have the true facts at hand?
- **“I do not have time to report my incidents twice, i.e. first to the SAPS and then to TSI”**. We very much doubt whether any business is so busy that they cannot afford to spend 5 minutes on the TSI website to list an incident. If you have a dedicated OHS person in the organisation, it is a simple addition to that person’s responsibilities to also report all incidents (and attempts) to TSI.

Now let us consider the advantages in reporting all incidents to a centralised facility like TSI.

- Better informed risk treatment actions. As indicated earlier, if one has proper information about the risks that face the industry - where, what and how - better informed decisions may be taken for risk treatment.
- Security awareness baseline. At present there is NO baseline of the extent of tourism victimisation in this country. There is no database, except the TSI one, that at a national level can provide this. If one does not have this available, then how can one be expected to put up a cogent argument to the NDT and the rest of Government for better resource allocation?
- Better informed crisis management actions. Once we have proper information, and once the crisis management capability is in place - before end 2015 hopefully - we could align our crisis intervention resources with available information across the country as to where which types of incidents are likely to occur. This will guarantee more rapid responses and better focused actions.

There are ways to share information without risking one's reputation or compromising the industry.

- Firstly, the TSI does not reflect back to the customers that receive its products the names of any institutions where victimisation has taken place. This is only

done in one of two instances (a) where the members agree that everyone can see their information, and (b) where it is anyhow in the public domain, i.e. the media.

- Secondly, the information that is case sensitive is not shared with anyone. In future, once the TSI gains more traction, we will be more involved in crime prevention activities within the PPP. For this high quality information is required. Such information will then only be used for operational planning purposes. At present we look a bit silly when asked to provide information for planning.
- Thirdly, TSI is busy with further developments to its website that in future will include a secure portal through which members can access their products. This will further enhance information security.

## Conclusion

Sharing information on incidents is imperative. This must also include attempted incidents, i.e. where perpetrators did not succeed in their endeavours.

[ *Report all tourism incidents at  
www.tourismsafety.co.za* ]

Only with a proper database in place can we establish a baseline of tourism victimisation in this country, and can we as the TSI be an effective force within the PPP when it comes

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to controlling crime. This is not a service that we want to provide for the sake of. This is a service that you require from us.

Untie our hands. Remove the blindfolds, and let us have the capability to properly pursue our mandate on your behalf.