SAFEY Emergency System
How a mobile app can keep you safe during a terrorist attack

Summary

The terrorist attacks that continue to occur in popular travel destinations have resulted in intense global media coverage and left parents and students feeling uncertain about study abroad.

Consequently, more universities are turning to mobile apps for their student's travel safety. Information is vital in emergency situations, and travel security apps can provide alerts in real-time – during those moments when travelers need clear and concise information.

Mobile apps and counter-terrorism

Technology has improved how information is received during emergencies. Mobile apps are now playing an increasing role in emergency responses and rescues, but also with travel preparation and safety.

Counter-terrorism is not just a role for governments, but is something for all people to be aware of. Having access to accurate information during a crisis will assist those in an unfamiliar area to stay safe. Travel security apps are a growing market, as travelers are increasingly relying on smartphones for information and alerts when abroad. A recent survey of 30,000 people by TripAdvisor showed that more than 87% reported using a smartphone while abroad.

Communication is critical in moments of crisis. Students and staff alike need effective technology where alerts and messages can be received, especially during an emergency. Whether students need to alert their study abroad security manager or loved ones at home, this is when communication services need to work. To stay safe while studying abroad, travelers must have immediate access to critical information, and a system that can be tailored to efficiently deliver information.

Travel security apps can also be used for other types of emergencies, such as natural disasters, where real-time information can make all the difference to a student's safety. When traveling, people often don't have a plan for natural disasters. Students may not know what to do in during a bushfire in Australia or a flood in Switzerland. This is how apps can provide information in the moment, through alerts and notifications.

Emergency apps have been created in many countries, but often don't have students in mind. Some only send information about an incident to locals or to registered users. This can be troublesome for travelers, as they need a service that sends alerts based on their current location, not their home address.

SAFEY, a travel security app, demonstrated its effectiveness when users received warnings based on their locations when a tsunami hit Japan in 2011. The alert was sent to users (in English) 47 minutes before the wave hit the shoreline, providing enough time for people to reach higher ground and safety.
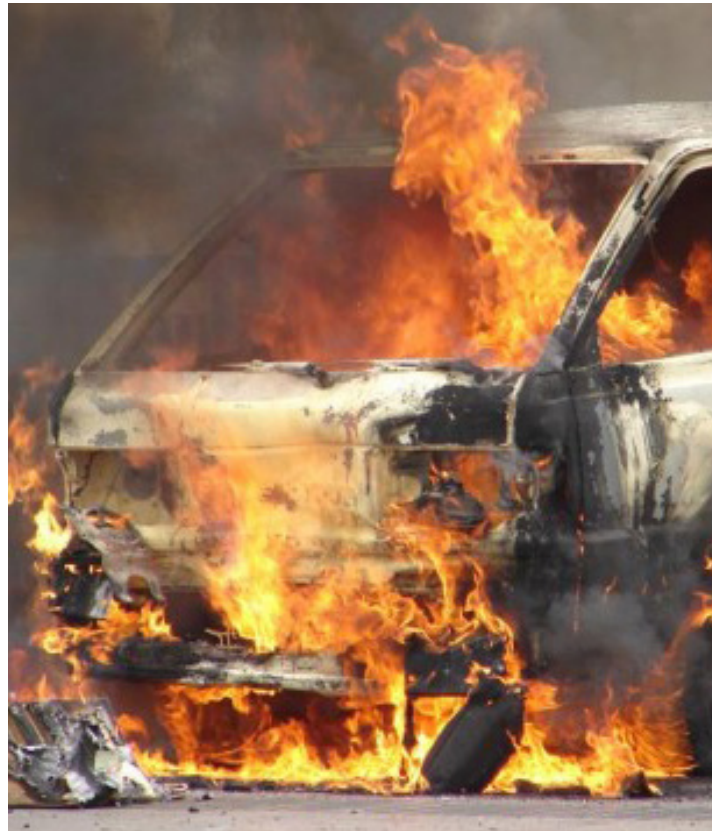
Travel security apps: keeping students safe abroad

SAFEY is a travel security app that has been helping students all over the world by providing real-time alerts and travel security information. The SAFEY Emergency System sends alerts for natural disasters, accidents, outbreaks of disease, political unrest, crime or economic instability, and travel delays.

With the recent truck attack tragedy in Berlin, SAFEY sent SMS alerts in real-time to all users in the vicinity. Having the right information at the right time can help people respond appropriately in the widespread confusion and chaos that often follows. Receiving vetted information during a crisis is extremely valuable.

During a similar attack in Nice, a security manager using SAFEY at home in Northern Europe, received targeted information and advice from SAFEY on the situation. This enabled him to get in contact with some colleagues that were on location, and keep them informed as the situation unfolded. His colleagues responded by hiding behind tables in restaurants close to the attack. Before the SAFEY information reached them, they were unaware of what was happening around them.

This is how travel security apps are keeping travelers safe in times of crisis, when it is difficult to get a clear picture of what is happening and what to do next. Having access

to a security analysis team in the palm of your hand, via a smartphone, can help travelers in moments when information is scarce.

It is also important for travelers to invest in the right travel security app. In response to increases in terror incidents, many governments are releasing apps to help counter terrorism. France released its own security app, SAIP, a month before the Nice incident; however, the app didn't send out an alert until three hours after the event. Even considering technical shortcomings, the SAIP app is still a great initiative and more governments should follow suit – but for travelers it has shortcomings because SAIP does not reach beyond the borders of France.

Can truck attacks ever be stopped?

Similarities are being drawn between the incidents in Berlin and Nice, which killed a total of over 100 people and injured many more. Many believe that city planning needs to be hardened by using more special barriers and bollards that are capable of withstanding direct impacts. Unfortunately, incidents of this nature are hard to predict and prevent.

SMS alerts vs social media

Social media has established itself as a platform from which constant observations and reports on events via a global community of users are possible. Data from these sources can provide information on disaster response, infrastructure problems and public safety.

However, a study completed by IEEE concluded that different platforms should be used in the field of disaster response. Social media provides a lot of information for users, but too much unverified information is a problem. The high contribution from untrained voluntary helpers can be perceived as a hindrance during these situations. Time is a critical element during emergencies, and it is imperative that information presented to travelers is accurate.

This study highlighted that alerts that were vetted by experts were more useful during times of crisis. This is where travel security apps have proven to be more useful than social media during emergencies.

Study abroad and travel apps
Study abroad programs have an important role in ensuring that their students and staff are prepared for emergencies, and at the very least, know who to contact for assistance. Emergency situations that impact the health and safety of students require quick and deliberate action. Organizations that are prepared for crisis situations, and have emergency plans in place, are in a stronger position to keep their students safe.

Travel apps are growing in demand for study abroad programs. They provide a flexible solution to travel security, and improve efficiency for organizations. Security apps enable two-way communication between the user and their security offices, allowing security managers to keep track of potentially dangerous developments and to deliver real-time warnings to their students.

Mobile apps are becoming an important part of many study abroad programs Duty-of-Care responsibilities

There is a need for study abroad programs to embrace new technologies to keep their students safe. For many it can be as simple as having immediate access to critical information, and a system that can be tailored to efficiently deliver that information. This is exactly what travel security apps and management tools, such as The SAFEY Emergency System, can provide.

In the information age, it can be too easy to rely on traditional forms of media, and to forget about the importance of diversifying information sources.

The goal of the SAFEY Emergency System to provide the right information at the right time. We are dedicated to keeping students safe and aim to save lives.

How to be prepared during a terrorist attack

What to do during a terrorist attack

- Remain calm.
- Follow the instructions of emergency personnel.
- Listen to local media broadcasts for further information.
- Implement continuity and emergency plans, if safe to do so.

Evacuation during a terrorist attack

- Respond immediately to any instructions from emergency services regarding evacuation.
- Seek to distance yourself from the situation, if safe to do so; exit the area quickly, using routes that lead away from the danger, and make yourself known to police or emergency personnel.
- Risk-management teams may be liaising with emergency services and on site personnel to implement an evacuation.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities, do not use alternative routes due to potential road closures, ongoing counter-terrorism operations or the threat of secondary attacks.
- The incident may require you to seek shelter, if so, ensure all doors and windows are locked.
- Be prepared to wait and remain patient.