

# **Manual for Chairpersons of health and disability ethics committees (2004)**

**Sally Cook**  
National Co-ordinator of Ethics Committees  
[sally\\_cook@moh.govt.nz](mailto:sally_cook@moh.govt.nz)  
(04) 496 2053

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# Introduction

The purpose of this Manual is to assist Chairpersons of Ethics Committees by:

- providing an overview of the functions of Ethics Committees
- describing Committee processes and requirements
- suggesting helpful hints for problem situations.

The Chairperson's Manual should be read in conjunction with:

- the Committee's Terms of Reference
- the Operational Standard for Ethics Committees
- the Administrator's Manual.

Chairpersons should feel free to seek clarification of any aspect of Ethics Committee processes from both the Administrator of their Committee and the National Co-ordinator of Ethics Committees.

Chairpersons should feel free to suggest improvements, additions or clarifications to this Manual at any time to the National Co-ordinator. All feedback will be gratefully received and considered.

# 1. Approval

The Health Research Council Ethics Committee (HRCEC) is currently responsible for approving Ethics Committees that consider applications for ethical approval. Approval is generally granted for three years and is required under both the Health Research Council Act 1990 and the Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2001. The National Co-ordinator will advise Administrators when their committee's approval is due to expire.

The Administrator will liaise with the HRCEC and collate the information required for approval. Most of this information is contained in the Committee's annual report. The process to be followed by the Administrators is set out in the Administrator's Manual. The Chairperson is responsible for the sign-off of the papers, and ultimately responsible for ensuring that the committee is approved at all times.

A copy of the requirements of the HRCEC for approval is attached to this Manual as an appendix.

In addition to HRCEC approval, the Director-General of Health must approve each Ethics Committee under the Code of Health and Disability Support Services Consumers' Rights 1996.

To review studies funded by the United States Government, the Committee must be registered with the US Office for Human Research Protections. As part of the registration, Chairpersons are required to complete three on-line training modules at [www.hhs.gov/ohrp](http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp). A copy of the certificates of completion should be provided to the Administrator for the Committee records. Administrators will co-ordinate this process whenever a new Chairperson is appointed.

# 2. Advertising of Meetings

As part of the accountability to the public they protect, it is desirable for the meetings of Ethics Committees to be open to the public.

Notice of Committee meetings will be placed on the website and distributed to the Health Research Council and other interested organisations. Meeting agendas will be placed on the website prior to the meeting.

### 3. Agenda Preparation

The Administrator is responsible for preparing and circulating the monthly agenda.

The following steps should be followed for each agenda.

- The Administrator prepares the agenda according to the Committee's desired layout.
- The Administrator obtains sign-off from the Chairperson.
- Copies of the agenda are be circulated to each committee member at least seven days before the meeting.

Late items may be added to a meeting agenda at the discretion of the Chairperson.

### 4. Annual Report

Ethics Committees are established under section 11 of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000. All committees so established are required to produce Annual Reports, which the Ministry of Health is required to summarise in its own Annual Report, which in turn is tabled in the House of Representatives. Annual Reports are an important part of the accountability framework of ethics committees.

Annual Reports are to be completed and distributed by 31 March each year. Copies should be sent to the HRCEC, other Ethics Committees, and the National Co-ordinator, who will prepare a summary of the Annual Reports for the Minister's consideration. A copy of the Annual Report should be posted on the Committee's website as soon as possible after it has been considered by the Minister.

As part of the process of producing an annual report, the Chairperson is required to:

- provide a "Chairperson's Report", based on the work of the Committee for the year, for inclusion in the Annual Report
- sign off the annual report, once the report has been considered and approved by the Committee.

The Committee Administrator is responsible for the compilation of the Annual Report in consultation with the Chairperson. The standard layout for the Annual Report is set out in the Administrator's Manual.

## 5. Appeals

Decisions of ethics committees may be appealed by the Principal Investigator to the Sub-Committee on Appeals of the National Ethics Advisory Committee. The principles of natural justice, which hold that each party has the right to be heard and the right to be judged by an impartial decision-maker, underlie the appeals process.

When an appeal is lodged, the SCA will notify the relevant committee immediately. The Chair and the Administrator are jointly responsible for forwarding copies of all information relevant to that appeal, including the original application, minutes of meetings at which it was discussed, correspondence, members' notes and email, and so forth, to the SCA as quickly as possible. Any additional information requested by the SCA should also be provided.

If requested by the SCA, the Chair must attend the appeal hearing.

Other forms of challenge available to researchers include complaint and second opinion. Before proceeding to appeal, a second opinion must be sought.

## 6. Appointments

Members are appointed to Ethics Committees through the public appointments process. This process is designed to ensure that the best candidates for appointment to the Committees are chosen, and contributes to the credibility of Ethics Committees.

Appointments are made by the Minister of Health, and are subject to the terms and conditions set out in each Committee's Terms of Reference.

## 7. Attendance Fees

The level of remuneration for members of ethics committees is set with regard to the State Services Commission's *Fees Framework*.

The Chair's attendance fee is set at \$330 per day (plus half a day's preparation fee). Members receive \$250 per day (plus half a day's preparation fee). The Chairperson and deputy Chairperson also receive an allowance of up to one extra day per month to cover work done under the delegated authority of the Ethics Committee.

## 8. Closed Meetings

As part of the accountability to the public they protect, it is desirable for the meetings of Ethics Committees to be open to the public. However, there are some circumstances in which it may be necessary for the Committee to close a meeting, or part of a meeting, to the public. The Committee's Terms of Reference specify that meetings should be:

- open for the discussion of broad issues
- closed where necessary to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants in research
- closed where applicants provide good and sufficient reasons for this to occur. The reasons must be consistent with the Official Information Act.

Decisions to close meetings or parts of meetings should be taken in accordance with the guidelines as to consensus decision-making processes set out elsewhere in this Manual.

The outcomes of applications considered in closed meetings must be included in the minutes of that meeting and in the Committee's Annual Report.

Any information held by the Committee regarding discussions during a closed meeting remains discoverable under the Official Information Act 1982.

## 9. Committee Administrators

Committee Administrators are employees of the Ministry of Health. Administrators report to the National Co-ordinator of Ethics Committees.

Administrators are responsible for

- distributing, receiving and acknowledging application forms
- liaising with researchers
- preparing and distributing agendas and meeting papers
- preparing Annual Reports
- attending meetings and taking minutes
- maintaining committee information systems

Chairpersons and Administrators should have a close working relationship. It is important for Chairpersons and Administrators to develop and maintain good frameworks for dealing with the day-to-day business of the Committee. Each Administrator has an “Administrators’ Manual” which details the requirements of the position.

The National Co-ordinator will liaise with the Chairperson when a new Administrator is to be appointed.

## 10. Committee Management

### Committee Members

The Chairperson should take all reasonable steps to ensure that Committee members work together productively. The Chair is also responsible for ensuring that the Committee is run in a way that minimises the likelihood of problems with members arising. Chairs should alert the National Co-ordinator to problems arising with individual Committee members or with the Committee as a whole.

This Manual contains suggestions of ways to deal with problems that may arise with Committee members and researchers. The examples below are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the potential problems that may arise. If the Chair is unsure of how to deal with such a problem, the National Co-ordinator can provide advice and assistance.

In the final instance, the Minister of Health has the power to remove a Committee member for inability to perform the functions of office, bankruptcy, neglect of duty, or misconduct. However, it is expected that this power will be exercised only in very exceptional circumstances.

**Problem:** *A member on the Committee is a regular attendee but rarely contributes to discussions.*

- Find out why the member is silent.

#### *Issues with confidence*

- Encourage an open and non-critical atmosphere.
- Promote a degree of informality.
- Affirm contributions to discussion.
- Be aware of members’ strengths and weaknesses.
- Encourage people to use their expertise.
- Initiate one-on-one training with the Chairperson or a senior member of the Committee.

- Draw members into discussion, for example by asking them directly if they have anything to add.

*Issues with competence*

- Provide training in looking at protocols.
- Encourage attendance at training programmes, in particular, new member training programmes.
- Focus on the area(s) of expertise for which the member was appointed to the Committee.

*Preparedness*

- Delegate some responsibility for protocol review.
- Ascertain if the member is over-committed.

***Problem: A member on the Committee has an irregular attendance record.***

- Discuss irregular attendance privately with the member.
- Do not ignore regular lack of attendance.
- Express concern and offer the Committee's help, either verbally or in writing.
- Take apologies into account.
- Be pro-active about calling the member and asking if they will be attending the next meeting.
- Discuss priorities with the member.
- Inform absentee members of the pressure that is placed on the rest of the committee when one member is continually absent.

Continued irregular attendance may be addressed through a leave of absence

Members may apply to the Committee for a leave of absence. In deciding whether to allow a leave of absence, the Committee should consider whether the leave of absence would affect its ability to carry out ethical review in accordance with the high expectations of the Minister and the public. Disagreements over leaves of absences should be referred to the National Co-ordinator. In the final instance, the Minister has the power to remove Committee members for either inability to perform the functions of office or neglect of duty.

Using expert advisors may cover gaps in knowledge and expertise caused by a Committee member's leave of absence. No provision exists for the Committee to co-opt replacement members where a member is on extended leave of absence.

***Problem: A member on your Committee regularly disrupts/prolongs business in an unhelpful manner.***

- Focus Committee on the task at hand.
- Reinforce previous Committee decisions on how to proceed/resolve issue.
- Value new members' questions.
- Distinguish between consensus and complete agreement.
- Lead Committee through consensus decision-making process more effectively.
- Discourage prolonged discussion of spelling errors and other minor matters. Ask:
  - is it an ethical issue?
  - is it appropriate?

## **Researchers**

***Researchers are generally critical of committee's operations.***

- Meet with the researchers.
  - Find out reasons for discontent.
  - Stress the Committee's purpose is to protect participants from harm.
  - Invite researcher to attend committee meetings to observe deliberations.
  - Invite researchers to present their protocols to the committee meetings.
  - Allow access to the Chairperson for researchers.
  - Facilitate group meetings.
  - Hold an open forum.
- Build good relationships with researchers.
- Avoid lengthy correspondence (which often leads to further disenchantment of researchers with Committee).
- Improve researchers' impression of the Committee.
- Where possible, speed up the review process.
- For student protocols, invite supervisors to attend.

## 11. Complaints

Complaints may be made against Ethics Committees regarding both administrative matters and decisions on applications. These matters are addressed in sections 7.13 and 7.14 of the Operational Standard respectively. Chairpersons must be aware of the processes involved in resolving complaints.

When the Committee receives a complaint, the National Co-ordinator should be notified immediately and provided with regular updates on the actions taken by the Committee to resolve the complaint. In addition, the National Co-ordinator should receive a copy of all correspondence related to the complaint.

The Administrator must acknowledge all written complaints within three working days of the receipt of the complaint. A copy of the complaint and acknowledgement must be forwarded to the Chairperson as soon as possible.

Complaints against the Committee or a Committee decision should be recorded in a separate file until such time as the complaint has been dealt with and finalised. Papers should then be transferred to the appropriate protocol file or general business file.

If the complainant is the lead researcher, the Committee must inform the complainant of their right to request a second opinion and to appeal.

A full description of all complaints received and actions taken in response to those complaints must be included in the Committee's Annual Report.

A written summary should be kept of verbal complaints, with a note as to the response given.

Where NEAC, the HRCEC, or the National Co-ordinator receives complaints about an Ethics Committee, the Committee involved will be notified of the complaint and involved in the process of resolving it.

## **12. Consensus Decision-making**

Committee decisions on applications should be by consensus wherever possible.

A consensus is reached when all members feel able to accept a decision. A consensus decision is not always unanimous – a few members may accept a decision they do not personally agree with. The goal of consensus decisions is to allow the issues involved in the decision to be worked through in a thorough way. Agreement comes when everyone feels that they have had the opportunity to contribute and there is a shift or movement towards a decision.

The Chairperson may “test” for consensus after summarising the discussion or summarising a proposed action. This may be achieved by noting areas of agreement and asking members whether they feel ready to reach consensus.

Consensus decision-making requires an atmosphere of openness and trust where full discussion and participation is sought. All members must be listened to and know that their contributions and suggestions will be respected.

If consensus is not possible, the Chair may agree that a vote be taken, with a two-thirds majority required for any decision. In such cases the Chair will hold a casting vote. A vote must only be taken when the discussion on an application has been fully exhausted.

## **13. Correspondence**

The Chairperson should discuss and agree with the Administrator the procedures to be followed for dealing with correspondence. While the Administrator is responsible for preparing the correspondence, the process for signing off the correspondence should be established in consultation with the Chairperson.

Committee correspondence should always be on Committee letterhead and carry the signature of either the Chair or the Administrator.

## **14. Delegated Authority**

Committees may grant delegated authority to the Chairperson to undertake certain defined tasks on behalf of the committee between meetings. These tasks often include the power to approve certain research applications on behalf of the Committee.

Where authority is delegated to the Chairperson, Committee guidelines on the use of this authority should be in place.

It is important that when there is a change of Chairperson, a record is made in the committee's meeting report of the change in the delegated authority. Occasionally this may be for one meeting where the Chairperson is absent and the deputy chairperson or another nominated lay member of the committee may chair the meeting.

## **15. Election of Deputy Chairperson**

The committee must elect a deputy chairperson to act in the place of the Chair in his or her absence. The deputy chairperson must be a non-lay member of the Committee.

If a consensus decision on a research application cannot be reached at a meeting at which the deputy chairperson is acting as chair, no vote on that application may be taken. The application in question should be considered at the next meeting at which the Chairperson is in attendance.

## **16. Expense Claims**

Committee Administrators hold copies of the official Expenses Claim Form. In line with Ministry of Health policy, all claims for expenses require evidence of expenditure, which will usually be a receipt or an account.

Administrators are responsible for ensuring expense claims are made on time and are accompanied by the appropriate documentation.

## **17. Expert Advice**

The Committee's Terms of Reference specify that expert advice may be sought from recognised experts on any matter relating to the Committee's business.

Advice may be sought from recognised experts with, for example:

- specialist knowledge in particular fields of science and medicine
- knowledge of the experiences and perspectives of people with disabilities
- awareness of gender health perspectives
- consumer and/or research participant perspectives
- an understanding of community health issues
- an understanding of relevant cultural perspectives
- an understanding of developing Māori research methodologies

- expertise in te reo Māori
- expertise in ethical theory.

## **18. Inter-Committee Matters**

Matters involving more than one Committee should always be resolved through the Chairpersons of those Committees. Such matters may include:

- boundary matters, where it is not clear which Committee has jurisdiction over an application
- matters involving a particular researcher or group of researchers
- matters of process.

Chairpersons should consult with and act on behalf of their Committee in discussions on inter-Committee matters.

## **19. Media**

If a media request is received, the Chairperson should discuss the proposed response with the National Co-ordinator. Advice on responding to media queries is available from the Ministry of Health Communications team through the National Co-ordinator.

Media training through the Ministry of Health will be made available to Chairpersons.

It is essential that the Committee be aware of the need to follow good processes so that its decisions can be defended in the media, if necessary.

## **20. Meetings**

A meeting of each ethics committees shall generally be held in each month. One meeting per month will generally be sufficient for the Committee to get through its business. Additional meetings must be agreed to by the National Co-ordinator.

The Chairperson is responsible for chairing each meeting at which they are in attendance. Where the Chairperson is unable to attend, the deputy chairperson will act in their place.

## 21. National Chairpersons' Meetings

The Chairpersons of Ethics Committees shall generally meet twice a year.

The purposes of the National Chairpersons' Meeting are to:

- discuss issues of common concern or interest
- address housekeeping matters with the National Co-ordinator
- develop communication links with other ethics committees such as NEAC, the HRCEC, and institutional ethics committees.

Chairpersons attend the meeting as representatives of their respective committees. Prior to attending the National Chairpersons' Meeting, each committee's Chairperson should therefore seek the views of their Committee on the various agenda items.

The Meeting shall be chaired by an elected member of the Chairpersons' group. This 'chair of chairs' shall be elected annually and shall serve no more than two years in the role.

The duties of the Chairperson of the National Chairpersons' Group are to:

- chair the meetings
- sign off correspondence as requested and approved by the group as a whole
- represent the group as requested and approved by the group as a whole.

## 22. Official Information Act

The Official Information Act 1982 is based on the principle of availability of information. This principle holds that when official information is requested, it must be made available unless good reason exists to withhold it.

Ethics Committees are subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act. As ministerial committees, all information held by Ethics Committees is deemed for the purposes of the Official Information Act to be held by the Minister of Health. *All information held by Ethics Committees is therefore discoverable under this Act.*

Applicants should be made aware that all information on them held by Ethics Committees can be requested under the Official Information Act.

There are strict timelines for responding to requests for official information. Chairpersons should be aware of these timelines and take responsibility for ensuring that they are met. The Office of the Ombudsmen publishes documents with practical

advice for dealing with requests under the Official Information Act. Reasons to withhold information are set out in the Act, with which all Chairpersons should be familiar.

The Minister of Health has very high expectations around the treatment of requests for official information. The National Co-ordinator must be notified whenever a request for official information is received. In some cases, it may be unclear whether a request for information should be treated as a request under the Official Information Act. In such cases, Chairpersons and Administrators should consult with the National Co-ordinator.

The National Co-ordinator will provide such help to Chairpersons as is necessary in order for every request for information to be dealt with in a satisfactory manner. In addition, training on the Official Information Act will be provided to all Committee members and to Administrators.

## **23. Operational Standard**

The Operational Standard provides guidance on principles to be considered when reviewing research proposals, and sets out consistent operational and administrative procedures common to all Ethics Committees. A copy of the Operational Standard will be provided to all Committee members. The National Co-ordinator can also provide extra copies on request.

Administrators are responsible for bringing a copy of the Operational Standard to each meeting of their Committee. Chairpersons are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their Committee follows the Standard, although it should be noted that where the Standard conflicts with the Committee's Terms of Reference, the latter take precedence.

Failure to follow the Operational Standard is unfair to applicants and other Ethics Committees, and is likely to result in complaints, second opinions, or appeals being lodged.

## **24. Reports/Minutes of Meetings**

Meeting minutes/reports should follow the same format as the agenda and should include the following information:

- decisions of the committee
- comments to be passed on to researchers
- action points as required by the Committee.

Unless specifically requested to do so, it is not usual to identify individual members' comments.

The draft minutes should be forwarded to the Chairperson for consideration within three working days of the meeting. On receipt of the draft minutes the Chairperson will:

- check that the minutes are an accurate record of the decisions/comments made by the Committee
- make any amendments/changes as necessary
- return the minutes to the Administrator within two working days of receipt.

The Administrator should then circulate the draft minutes among Committee members. Minutes should be approved by the Committee at their next meeting, and posted on the web as soon as possible after that.

## **25. Second Opinions**

Both Committees and researchers may ask for a second opinion from the HRCEC on any aspect of an application. The principles of natural justice, which hold that each party has the right to be heard and the right to be judged by an impartial decision-maker, underlie the second opinion process. Section 7.12 of the Operational Standard describes the second opinion process in more detail.

Where a second opinion is obtained, the original Ethics Committee makes the final decision, but is required to take the second opinion into consideration. Clear reasons must be given where the Committee disagrees with the HRCEC's opinion. Both the lead researcher and the HRCEC must be advised of the Committee's final decision on the matter.

## **26. Travel Arrangements**

When bookings are required for travel all air, accommodation and car rental reservations, including en route changes, must be booked through the Committee's Administrator. These reservations must be made through the Ministry's preferred travel agent.

The Ministry of Health has a policy on travel, attached to this Manual as an appendix, with which all Committee members should become familiar.

# Appendix I

## HRCEC CHECKLIST FOR ACCREDITATION AND REACCREDITATION

<b>COMMITTEE NAME</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>
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### COMMITTEE POLICIES For Institutional and Private Ethics Committees

	Operational Standard	Not present	Present but not adequate
Is a full set of Committee Policies for ethical review included with the application?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do the Committee's Policies Cover:

The function of the Committee	Yes/No
The kind of applications which require ethical approval	Yes/No
Details of any fast track procedures	Yes/No
Method of application	Yes/No
Informed consent procedures which meet the requirements of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights	Yes/No
Remuneration of participants (only to the extent that this constitutes recompense )	Yes/No
Compensation for injury or harm	Yes/No

### MEMBERSHIP

Is a list of current members enclosed?	Yes/No
Are members dates of appointment and retirement given?	Yes/No
Does the Committee have at least ten members?	Yes/No
Are their categories given (Chair, lay, health professional, Maori)?	Yes/No
Is the Chair lay?	Yes/No
Are there at least two Maori members? Include Hapu/Iwi Affiliation.	Yes/No
Is approximately 50% of the membership lay and representative of the community at large?	Yes/No
Does the Committee approximate a 50% balance of gender?	Yes/No
Are professional affiliations (if any) given?	Yes/No
Is the process of appointment described?	Yes/No
Were at least two members appointed following public nomination (one of whom must be lay) ?	Yes/No
Does the Committee include a member with formal training in ethics?	Yes/No
Is a description of each person's expertise included?	Yes/No
Does at least one person have scientific expertise?	Yes/No
Is there a balance of experience, knowledge and perspectives in Ethics, Law, Nursing, Women's Health, Patient Advocacy and Tikanga Maori?	Yes/No
Do at least two members have research expertise (with at least one in the health field)?	Yes/No
Is there a lawyer on the Committee?	Yes/No
Where a Committee will review clinical research, are there at least two clinicians, one of whom is currently in active practice, on the Committee?	Yes/No
If the Committee is an Institutional Ethics Committee, is there a student representative?	Yes/No

### REPORTING

Does the Committee report to the University Council? (If relevant )	Yes/No
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## Appendix II

### Ministry of Health Domestic Travel Policy

The Ministry of Health is aware of the personal and family pressures that travelling out of town may sometimes have on its staff members. Our travel policy takes this into account and also new emerging technologies that offer a more efficient alternative means to achieving our business objectives. It is not always necessary to physically travel, as all staff now have access to telephone and video conferencing facilities throughout the organisation. Please consider these alternative means before contacting the Ministry's travel agency.

*Karen Poutasi, Director-General of Health*

#### **POLICY**

This document sets out the Ministry's travel policy, to be adhered to when travelling on Ministry business. The Travel Officer, Facilities Management is responsible for the development of this policy and for ensuring its distribution to all travellers, travel coordinators, expense approvers, accounts payable staff, newly hired employees expected to travel and the Ministry's travel agency.

Any questions or requests for information regarding this policy should be directed to Facilities Management. Day to day issues such as information requests from any of the suppliers (rental cars, flights etc) and/or complaints about supplier's services the Ministry's agency is your first point of call.

#### **Travelling for the Ministry**

All travel has to be booked through the Ministry's appointed travel agency to ensure the Ministry receives the maximum benefit of special negotiated preferred arrangements. All travel must be approved prior to the travel being undertaken as follows:

- Domestic Travel - Manager
- International Travel - Deputy Director General or Director General.

For more details please refer under the section 'Organising Travel'.

## **Travel Arrangements**

### **Travel Coordinators**

Travel coordinators have been assigned the job of booking Ministry travel on your behalf. They are the liaison point between the Ministry, yourself and the agent and it is their job to assist you. The agency will only accept bookings requested from these authorised travel coordinators.

Travel Coordinators are generally PA's, EA's, Support Officers or Group Support. They have access to all relevant information and can assist you with any queries.

### **Responsibilities of Ministry Employees**

*The Ministry's travel agent has been fully briefed in respect of the Ministry's travel policy and will assist the Ministry in adhering to the policy guidelines. However, you should be aware all employees who incur expenses while travelling are responsible for complying with this policy.*

*Employees submitting expenses that are not in compliance with this policy risk delayed, partial, or forfeit their reimbursement. Cases of significant abuse may result in disciplinary action, including employee termination.*

Managers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that any expenses reimbursed or paid for by the Ministry are in compliance with this policy and accord with necessary paper/electronic based approvals. Managers are responsible for coding all approvals to the correct Cost Centre. Please note that Finance will reject claims that are in breach of this policy.

### **Reimbursement**

It is Ministry policy to reimburse staff for actual and reasonable travel expenses that are directly related to the transaction of Ministry business. However, you are expected to exercise your best judgement regarding expenses you incur. When submitting expense claims in line with this policy, you are not expected to gain or lose financially.

Reimbursement for expenses not covered in this policy require the approval of your Manager or Deputy Director General. If you are in any doubt, discuss the proposed costs with your Manager or Deputy Director General prior to travelling.

## Domestic and International Air Travel

*All employees are expected to travel in economy class, with the following exceptions.*

- *The employee is accompanying the Minister, or special prior agreement has been reached with your Deputy Director-General or Director-General.*
- A Deputy Director-General may travel business class with the approval of the Director-General.
- Staff can travel business class when traveling internationally (with the prior approval of the Executive Team) if the total flying time includes at least one long haul sector of more than nine hours flying time. If you elect to fly business class in this situation you cannot have officially paid stopovers unless the airline schedules make a stopover unavoidable.
- In some circumstances, with approval from a Deputy Director-General, an exception may be granted where the nature of the trip is non-business related (e.g. relocation, training and attendance at conferences), with each application being judged on its merits.

### Lowest Available Airfare

All airline tickets must be booked at the lowest available airfare or fixed fare recommended by Atlantic Pacific. Atlantic Pacific will recommend airline preference in order to maximise the airfare and/or rebates offered. *Please note that this depends on what type of agreement has been negotiated with the airlines. The lowest practical available airfare applies to all approved classes of travel for Ministry travellers and overrides all frequent flyer preferences.*

### Koru & Qantas Airline Club

Airline clubs have been designed for the business traveller to ensure that your travel is as comfortable and productive as possible.

Generally, membership of airline clubs at the Ministry's expense (eg, Koru, Qantas Club) is restricted to those staff who undertake at least 4 trips per month or 48 trips per annum. If you join an airline club at the Ministry's expense you can only do so with prior Deputy Director-General approval.

Applications for airline memberships outside these criteria are at the discretion of Deputy Directors-General.

The Ministry will only pay for membership to one airline club only and the term of the membership will be in line with the Ministry's Corporate account. In exceptional circumstances application for dual membership will require Director General approval. Corporate membership applications must be made through the Ministry's travel agency or Facilities Management to achieve any discounts.

## **Development Funds**

The allocation of business development funds provided by airlines to be used to either renew existing memberships or provide for new memberships are to be allocated according to seniority i.e. Director General, Deputy Director General, Chief Internal Auditor and 2 per Directorate for other staff with a frequency of travel of at least 4 trips per month or 48 trips per annum.

Deputy Director Generals may approve memberships based on anticipated travel that will meet the agreed level of frequency.

## **Please note**

The Ministry's corporate account can either be with Air New Zealand or with Qantas depending on what agreement has been negotiated. Corporate memberships belong to the Ministry and should only be used by designated frequent travellers. The Ministry reserves the right to move these memberships to other travellers within the organisation and will review the travel frequency of individual travellers quarterly. Information on staff travel frequency is available from Facilities Management. Membership cards must be surrendered to Facilities Management when you terminate your employment with the Ministry.

## **Airpoints / Hotel Points**

The Ministry does not support the use of airpoints schemes. Any points accumulated from travel and expenses paid by the Ministry, belong to the Ministry and must not be used for personal benefit. The accumulated airpoints paid for by the Ministry must be used for Ministry Business.

You should not insist on airlines on the basis of loyalty induced by airpoints scheme membership, if this is not the best travel option.

## **General**

### *Travel by Spouses, Partners, Family or Friends*

The Ministry will not pay for any family or friends to travel with you. Business class or any other fares may not be cashed in or modified in any way to assist or fully pay for any travel by family members or friends.

## *Traveller Health and Safety*

The Ministry has a duty of care and responsibility to all staff travelling on official Ministry business and recognises the importance of health, safety and security as well as the general wellbeing of staff as paramount and in recognition of this obligation comprehensive travel insurance is provided.

## **Accommodation**

### **Domestic Travel**

#### *Hotel, Motel and Apartments*

The Ministry has negotiated preferred arrangements with national accommodation providers. The rates negotiated are reviewed annually. Employees are not entitled to engage in such negotiations or liaise directly with preferred suppliers as this is undertaken on behalf of the Ministry by its travel management provider. Employees are required to use these hotels/apartments whenever feasible. A list of hotel/motels can be found on the Bulletin board or Intranet (once available). This list will continue to be refined as we review the value of discounts achieved.

#### *Private Accommodation*

If you stay privately you will not be paid an accommodation allowance but may be reimbursed for reasonable contribution on production of receipts. If dining out, actual and reasonable costs for only your evening and breakfast meals will be reimbursed on presentation of receipts.

Arrangements of this nature should be discussed with your Manager or Deputy Director General first.

If you are employed under the terms of the Ministry of Health collective employee's agreement you can be paid an allowance for staying privately as per the provisions of the collective agreement

#### *Other Expenses*

##### Meal Expenses:

The following amounts are considered to be reasonable expenditure for New Zealand:

- Breakfast      \$10 - \$15
- Lunch            \$5 - \$10
- Dinner           \$20 - \$30

If you are still employed under the terms of the Ministry of Health collective agreement you can be reimbursed for meals per the provisions of the collective agreement.

The following expenses may also be claimed provided that the claim is supported by receipts:

- taxi/bus/parking fees - wherever possible Ministry taxi chits should be used.
- entertainment expenses (when accompanied by written approval from the relevant manager).
- laundry expenses (for travel over three days).
- toll calls to family at home up to a maximum of \$20 (in total) where travel is for more than three days.

#### *Non Reimbursable Expenses:*

Personal incidental expenses such as alcoholic drinks and snacks, including hotel minibar and hotel bar. Others include; traffic fines, hotel room movies, baby sitting fees, toiletries and haircuts. Exceptions can be made with your Manager's prior approval, ie. when expenditure relates to entertainment expenses.

Toll calls to home can be reimbursed provided they are kept to a reasonable level (up to a maximum of \$20) when travel is of more than three days. All non business toll calls on hotel telephones are to be paid direct to the hotel at time of check out. You should obtain your manager's approval prior to traveling if you are the main care giver or where other circumstances apply.

### **International Travel**

International accommodation has to be booked through the agency in order to achieve maximum discounted rates via the agencies negotiated hotel programme.

#### *Reimbursement of Expenses*

Expenses incurred while traveling overseas on Ministry business will be reimbursed on an actual and reasonable basis only. Receipts will be required for all expenses claimed.

When traveling on business you will be reimbursed actual and reasonable accommodation costs on presentation of receipts. Where possible, the Ministry's travel agent will arrange for accommodation and meal expenses to be charged back to the Ministry. Charge back costs will only include meal and accommodation costs. All other costs, whether reimbursable or not, will be paid directly by you.

## *Other Expenses*

### Meal Expenses:

What is considered reasonable expenditure on meals while traveling internationally will vary dependent on location. The meal rates published by ECA (available from Facilities Management or your travel co-ordinator) are accepted by the Ministry and will be used as a guide only. Receipts are still required for reimbursement of meal costs.

In addition, the following expenses may also be claimed provided that the claim is supported by receipts:

- taxi/bus/parking fees.
- entertainment expenses (when accompanied by written approval from the relevant manager).
- laundry expenses (for travel over three days).
- toll calls to home will be reimbursed provided they are kept to a reasonable level, up to a maximum of \$50 (in total), when travel is of more than three days. Reimbursement beyond this level will be either at your Managers or Deputy Director Generals discretion. All toll calls on hotel telephones are to be paid direct to the hotel at time of check out.
- The cost of any visa's or other documentation required before travel can commence.

### Tipping for travel to USA/Canada:

It is customary to tip in both the USA and Canada for services provided with the norm being anywhere between 10-15% of the total bill/fare for which a receipt will not be generated. Reimbursements for such expenses will be at the discretion your Manager or Deputy Director General.

Please note:

The cost of issuing or renewing passports will not be met by the Ministry.

### Daily Expense Rates for Overseas Travel:

The expense rates published by ECA (available from Facilities Management) are to be used as a guideline only. The current rates are available on the bulletin board or Intranet (once available).

## Motor Vehicles

### Rental Cars

Cars should be rented by employees only when other means of transport are unavailable, more costly, or impractical. The use of a rental car must be justified as a business need and not as a matter of personal convenience.

All rentals should be for up to 1.6 litre size vehicles, unless travelling more than 100km and/or four or more people are travelling together. All car rentals should be booked by the Ministry's travel agency.

*Facilities Management, your travel coordinator and the Ministry's travel agent hold details regarding our preferred supplier. The latest hire rates are available on the Bulletin board or Intranet (once available).*

### *Vehicles Hired Overseas*

Insurance for all rental vehicles hired overseas must be taken with the rental company as the Ministry of Health does not have insurance for these vehicles. Atlantic Pacific will ensure insurance is arranged for all international rental car bookings.

The primary reason for taking the insurance of the hire company is so that the insurance policy in place reflects the requirements of the local country, for example, to ensure cover for the relevant liability laws that apply.

The Ministry's Travel Insurance Policy only insures the amount of the rental vehicle's insurance excess that the Ministry employee is responsible for in the event of a claim. The limit of cover for the motor policy excess is NZ\$3,000. If a claim does occur it would be expected that a credit card payment be made for the excess amount and the invoice and receipt from the hire company be retained for attaching to the claim form on return to NZ.

### *Vehicles Hired in NZ*

The Ministry of Health's Motor Vehicle insurance policy provides cover for vehicles hired in NZ. Therefore insurance taken with the rental car company is not required. The excess is \$500 for drivers over age 25. Windscreen cover is free.

All claims and queries should be directed through Sally Davis, Facilities Management, Christchurch.

# PROCEDURES

## Travel

### Travel Agency Services

The Ministry's preferred travel agent is Atlantic and Pacific Radius

#### Contact Details:

Domestic:	Nicola Lord	(04) 801 2349	<a href="mailto:nicola.lord@atlantic.co.nz">nicola.lord@atlantic.co.nz</a>
	Lisa Betteridge	(04) 801 2342	<a href="mailto:lisa.betteridge@atlantic.co.nz">lisa.betteridge@atlantic.co.nz</a>
	Claire McCabe	(04) 801 2325	<a href="mailto:claire.McCabe@atlantic.co.nz">claire.McCabe@atlantic.co.nz</a>
	Meredith Holmes	(04) 802 8773	<a href="mailto:meredith.holmes@atlantic.co.nz">meredith.holmes@atlantic.co.nz</a>

International:	Kylie Purcell	(04) 801 2346	<a href="mailto:lorenn@atlantic.co.nz">lorenn@atlantic.co.nz</a>
	Mark Maloney	(04) 801 2347	<a href="mailto:mark.maloney@atlantic.co.nz">mark.maloney@atlantic.co.nz</a>

Leisure Travel:	Lorraine Mair	(04) 801 2320	<a href="mailto:lorraine.mair@atlantic.co.nz">lorraine.mair@atlantic.co.nz</a>
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#### Office Hours & Contact Details:

Mon-Fri:	6:30AM-11:00PM
Sat/Sun:	8:30AM-5:00PM

Outside of this our 24-hour paging service takes effect for emergencies.

Phone Number:	(04) 385 6300
Toll Free Number	0800 800 483
Fax Number:	(04) 384 3178

#### Traveller Assistance:

24 Hours a day, 7 days a week, New Zealand wide: 0800 800 483

#### *ACCOUNT MANAGER*

Margaret Forster	(04) 801 2331	<a href="mailto:margaretf@atlantic.co.nz">margaretf@atlantic.co.nz</a>
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## Rental Car Services

The Ministry's preferred rental car provider is Budget Rent a Car Limited with all reservations made through Atlantic & Pacific Radius.

For private hire a personal staff hire account has been set up details of which are available from Facilities Management with payment by credit card or upon arrival. No charge back provisions to the Ministry apply and all bookings are to be made through Atlantic & Pacific Radius.

Contact Details:

### ACCOUNT MANAGER

Dean Mann                      (04) 924 9907                      [dmann@budget.co.nz](mailto:dmann@budget.co.nz)  
Fax                                      (04) 384 6470

Office Hours & Contact Details:

Mon-Fri:                                      8:00AM-5.00PM  
Sat/Sun:                                      8:00AM-12.00PM

Outside of core work hours local office numbers automatically divert.

Traveller Assistance:

24 Hours a day, 7 days a week, New Zealand wide: 0800 652 227

### *Deliveries*

Budget offers a fee delivery and pick up service, from any office or hotel (excluding residential), within 10kms of any budget location.

Budget are proud to provide a 100% smokefree fleet.

Provided a reservation has been made and advised to Budget they will arrange to have a car available on arrival.

### *Drop Off Outside Operating Hours*

Outside of normal operating hours the return of vehicles is accommodated with the provision of an after hours key return box. Customers can park the car outside the location, lock it and drop the keys in the box.

### *Rates*



## Hotel Accommodation

The Ministry's preferred accommodation provider is the CDL hotel chain, which comprises Millennium, Copthorne and Quality Hotels with all reservations made through Atlantic & Pacific Radius.

Contact Details:

### ACCOUNT MANAGER

Atlantic & Pacific Radius                      (04) 385 2485 or 0800 800 483

Traveller Assistance:

24 hours a day, 7 days, through Atlantic & Pacific Radius New Zealand wide: 0800 800 483

### *Rates*

Available from Atlantic & Pacific Radius or Facilities Management. Rates at Millennium and Copthorne hotels and resorts are inclusive of one continental breakfast. This rate will be charged regardless of whether a continental breakfast is consumed or not.

### *Traveller Profile Forms:*

All employees expected to travel should submit a completed traveller profile form and forward this to Atlantic & Pacific Radius to ensure that pertinent details and preferences are adhered to in the reservation process. Please ensure that you keep the agency advised as to any changes to contact details etc as they occur.

### *Cancellation of Tickets*

The Ministry's agency will advise amendment and cancellation fees at the time of reservation. No amendment or cancellation fees will accrue to the Ministry until after ticketing. Issuance of tickets/electronic tickets will take place as close as practical to travel. Travellers must **advise** their travel coordinator if they cancel or do not travel on an electronic ticket. All non-refundable and upgradeable tickets (transferable tickets) will be used towards additional travel. The Ministry will be supplied with a report detailing these tickets.

Please note that this depends on whether the Ministry negotiates a rebate or fixed rate agreement.

## **Insurance**

The Ministry's preferred insurance broker is Willis New Zealand Limited with all travel cover provided by American Home Assurance and arranged through Atlantic & Pacific Radius.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

### **Cancellation:**

All rooms will be guaranteed for late arrival. Employees must cancel the room reservation by 6:00pm on the day of arrival (4:00pm at some properties) to avoid a no-show charge. Cancellations may be made by calling the Ministry's agency. If the cancellation is made directly with the hotel, employees are advised to request and retain a cancellation number as documentation of the transaction.

### **Payment and Documentation:**

Charges for meals and accommodation are to be billed directly to the Ministry. Refer to expenses reimbursement for other costs. You are required to retain the hotel folio bill for reconciliation of accommodation expenses once your Cost Centre receives a statement. All accommodation (and travel) costs are to be coded at the time of reservation.

Where a private credit card is used for payment of hotel accounts, the credit card receipt on its own is not sufficient as a receipt. It is an audit requirement that a detailed invoice must also be attached.

### **Reimbursement of Expenses:**

If you joined the Ministry since 1 July 1992 and you are on an individual contract of employment or you are on an individual management contract, you will be reimbursed expenses incurred while traveling on Ministry business on an actual and reasonable basis.

If your employment terms and conditions fall under the expired collective employment agreement you should refer to your manager for limits of expense claims.

The actual cost of accommodation and the actual and reasonable cost of breakfast and evening meals will be reimbursed on the presentation of receipts. Where possible, the Ministry's travel agent will arrange for accommodation and meal expenses to be charged back to the Ministry. Charge back costs will only include meal and accommodation costs. All other costs, whether reimbursable or not, will be paid directly by the traveller.

## **MOTOR VEHICLES**

### Frequent Travellers:

Please contact the Ministry's travel agency to arrange a rapid access card. *Please note that this depends on what contract has been negotiated.*

### Reporting of Accidents:

Staff involved in motor vehicle accidents will be required to fill out an accident notification form as provided by the rental car company on return as well as informing Facilities Management on all pertinent details as soon as possible i.e. nature, time, date, location, registration number, make/model, witnesses, name, contact details, insurance company and any other relevant information that will assist the Ministry in making a claim with its insurers.

### Driver license:

*Drivers are to carry a current valid driver licence when renting a vehicle and/or using a Ministry pool vehicle. Rental cars cannot be hired if you are under 21 years of age.*

### Refuelling:

Employees are encouraged to refuel rental cars before returning them to the vendor. This practice can generate savings in the cost of petrol.

### Payment and Documentation:

Car rentals are to be charged directly to the Ministry's arranged account with the rental car company, and will be settled in the normal manner of a standard debtor account.

### Parking Fines/ Speeding Tickets/Traffic Offences:

These will not be reimbursed by the Ministry and are your responsibility.

### Use of Private Motor Vehicles:

Employees may use personal cars for business travel when other transportation is unavailable or uneconomical. The use of personal cars for business will be reimbursed at the standard rate prescribed by the IRD (62 cents per kilometre for the first 3000km, 19c per kilometre thereafter). This mileage allowance covers all automobile costs. (e.g. petrol, repairs, insurance, wear and tear), other than parking and tolls.

Rental and private vehicles should only be used for same day travel and when a Ministry vehicle is not available. A rental or private vehicle should not be used if the cost is likely to exceed the cost of airline travel unless this is the most convenient option available in which case the traveller may only claim either the mileage or the equivalent fare whichever is the cheaper. Any use of a private motor vehicle for company business requires prior approval from your manager. When a rental car is available it should be used in preference to private vehicles and the Ministry will only reimburse costs to the lower of rental plus petrol or 62 cents per kilometer. This is to ensure staff are travelling in appropriately insured vehicles and that staff cannot be accused of profiting from the system.

## **TAXIS**

*Taxis should only be used when walking distance is too great between appointments, no other means of transport (e.g. rental car, Ministry pool vehicle) is available and/or not cost effective to use.*

### *Chits and Cards:*

New taxi accounts and cards can be arranged through Facilities Management via your travel coordinator - prior approval from your manager will be required. Taxi chits can be arranged through the Ministry's travel agency via your travel coordinator – prior approval from your manager will be required. These chits must be kept in a secure place by the designated support person.

Taxis cards are only available for frequent travelers.

Sections (cost centres) will have full responsibility for their own taxi chits and taxi cards. Please contact the finance section for advice on how you can best manage your taxi accounts.

### Fixed Taxi Fares:

Ministry staff are encouraged to use fixed taxi fares (fixed taxi fares are pre-negotiated rates) wherever available and/or cost effective to do so. A list of fixed rates are available from Facilities Management, Bulletin board and or Intranet (once available).

### Cancellation of Cards:

Cards should be surrendered to Facilities Management when terminating your employment with the Ministry.

## **ADMINISTRATION/PROCESS**

### Travel Claims:

All travel claims must be with your manager for signing off within 10 days of the date your return. All travel claims will be processed for payment within one week of receipt by Finance.

### Traveller's Cheques and Currency:

Traveller's cheques and foreign currency issued to a traveller are cash advances and must always be coded to the Cash Advance Clearance Account (.6862).

NZD / Foreign exchange cash advances will be made on the basis of the daily allowances provided by ECA and must be approved prior to ordering by the Deputy Director General or Director General responsible, along with all other pending travel expenses such as: airfares, accommodation, etc. Unused traveller's cheques and currency should not be retained and used for any new travel.

Travellers cheques are to be returned countersigned to your group support or travel coordinator (the officer who issued the travellers cheques and currency) within five days of completion of travel together with any unused currency. Travel Coordinator will pass these to Finance for banking and the amount offset against your total claim.

## **ORGANISING TRAVEL**

### Authority to Travel:

All travel must be authorised in advance by your manager. You are asked to ensure that a copy of the signed approval is received by the sections travel coordinator or group support at the time travel is confirmed with the agency. Approvals make it possible for the group support to account for the disbursement of travel funds. This documentation is also important in meeting audit requirements and for insurance reporting requirements and must be retained by the travel co-coordinators who are required not only keep one full year but also current year to date records.

### Authority to Travel Forms:

Templates for the domestic and international travel authority forms are to be found on the Intranet (once available).

Finance can direct you to the correct forms to use.

### Delegated Levels of Authority:

- Domestic Travel Person/s with delegated financial authority - Manager

- International Travel (excluding Australia) - Deputy Director General or Director General
- Travel to Australia - Deputy Director General
- Expense Claims Person/s with delegated financial authority – cannot approve own expense claim

### *Booking Travel*

#### Domestic Travel Authorisation:

Tentative travel bookings can be made in advance of approval. They will not however be ticketed unless the booking is made by a Ministry travel coordinator who has sighted the approval to travel, or the signed approval has been faxed to the travel agent (there are exceptional circumstances to this but it does rely on you being identified to the travel agent as a Ministry of Health employee).

No bookings will be ticketed unless the cost centre code and section name has been provided to the travel agent.

#### Note:

This is a Ministry initiative and is not the responsibility of the agency. However the agency have been instructed not to issue tickets until correct approval has been received. Queries should be directed in the first instance to Facilities Management or a travel coordinator, not the agency.

#### International Travel Authorisation:

All proposals for international travel must be forwarded through your Manager to the Deputy Director General for approval. The reason for travel should be fully supported and must include costings, ie. advance, airfares, accommodation etc.

A copy of the approved international travel authority form should be forwarded to the sections travel coordinator (group support, EA, PA or Support officer).

Travel and attendance at overseas conferences must have Director General approval and final sign off by the Director General in order to avert over representation of Ministry staff at overseas conferences.

No bookings will be ticketed unless the cost centre code and section name has been provided to the travel agent.

#### Overseas Travel Records:

The sections travel coordinator (group support, EA, PA or support officer) must keep a record of ALL overseas travel (this includes Australia) for insurance purposes.

Credit Cards:

The Ministry does not issue or use corporate credit cards for travel purposes. (see credit card policy)

If a personal credit card is used for travel expenses, the credit card receipt on its own is not sufficient for a travel expenses claim. Itemised receipts will be required to verify the expense.

## **INSURANCE**

Travel Insurance:

The Ministry maintains a blanket insurance coverage for you while travelling overseas. The cover extends to the following, details are on the Bulletin board or Intranet (once available):

- personal accident
- medical
- false arrest
- hijack
- travel delay
- kidnap and ransom
- loss of deposits
- expatriation
- baggage, travel documents and credit cards
- money
- personal liability
- rental vehicle (up to \$3000. Rental companies motor vehicle insurance should always be taken as well).

For staff travelling with family members additional personal travel insurance is available at a cost of \$4.00 per person per day details of which are available from Facilities Management.

## Medical Travel Insurance Claims

The following procedures applies to the following:

Medical Emergencies:

Contact **FIRST ASSISTANCE** on the following 24 hour emergency phone number:

**Telephone: +64 9 377 8000**

Advise them of the nature of the accident/illness and request their assistance. They will advise you of the required course of action e.g. Local Hospitalisation, Emergency Evacuation, air Ambulance if necessary.

Other Medical Claims:

On production of evidence of insurance e.g. **FIRST ASSISTANCE** Card, Doctors and Hospitals may be satisfied to recover their fees directly from your Insurance Company. It is however possible that they may insist on payment from the insured person in which case you should retain detailed receipts in order to make a claim on your return to New Zealand.

Other Claims:

Notify Facilities Management of the loss immediately on your return to New Zealand who will notify Willis New Zealand limited.

The Ministry will cover insurance coverage for personal stopovers of less than two days as part of official travel. For personal travel as part of an official trip of more than two days but less than two weeks, you will have to organise your own insurance or you can use the Ministry's cover and reimburse the Ministry. You need to make prior arrangements with Facilities Management for this latter option. Any private travel using the Ministry cover should be recorded as such by the travel coordinator.

## General Travel Safety Tips

Air Travel:

The following suggestions will provide a more safe and pleasurable trip for travellers:

- Plan to arrive at the airport at least one hour before domestic flights and two hours before international flights.
- Do not leave luggage unattended or with someone you do not know.
- Never agree to carry anything on board or in your luggage for someone else.

- Put your name and company address on your luggage. For added security, use tags that conceal your name and address.
- Remove all old destination tags to avoid misdirection by baggage handlers.
- Carry all medication, important business papers, some toiletries and a change of clothing in carry-on luggage in case checked luggage is misplaced.
- Ensure that you don't have any sharp items such as knives, nail files, knitting needles or any items that may be considered dangerous on you or in your carry on luggage.
- Carry the emergency medical card at all times.
- Carry laptops as personal luggage at all times. Have some identifying label on your laptop in case it is taken away for inspection.

#### Upon Arrival at your Destination:

- Leave the airport as soon as possible after landing. Disturbances are more likely to occur in public airport lobbies.
- Beware of people claiming to be cab drivers in unmarked cars. Use licensed taxi services only.
- If renting a car, get maps in advance or from the car hire counter and clearly write out the directions from the airport to the hotel. Stop to ask for directions only in well-lit public areas. Keep the phone number of your destination with you.
- If unfamiliar with the local language, carry a card or matchbook with the hotel's name and address. This can be shown to a cab driver or police officer should you become lost.
- In developing countries, try to reserve rooms on the third through the sixth floor of the hotel. Disturbances and burglaries are most likely to affect ground and second story levels. In some countries, fire rescue equipment does not reach above the sixth floor.
- Do not leave a sign on the hotel room door for maid service as it announces an empty room for would-be thieves.
- Be sure to carry your credit/charge card company's telephone number in case the card is lost or stolen. Always report losses immediately.

## Hotel Fire Safety Tips:

While major hotels are equipped with smoke alarms, sprinkler systems and emergency evacuation instructions, fire safety awareness will increase a traveller's chance of survival in the unlikely event of a hotel fire.

When staying at a hotel:

- Check fire exits. Find the two nearest exits to your room and count the doorways so you can feel your way in the dark and smoke.
- Place your key on the nightstand and your shoes by the bed so you can find them easily.