A Word on the Hot Middle East

In the Middle East, a pressure cooker of religious and political conflict, many countries ban missionaries who represent religions other than Islam is illegal,” said a foreign service officer with the State Department based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. “If one is born a Moslem (one's father is Moslem), you are forbidden with the State Department based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.”

• A long list of cities that have been struck by tornadoes is continued from page 2
• Don’t open windows in an effort to relieve pressure; workbenches or pews for protection if the structure were to collapse.
• Once there, position people under sturdy objects like interior of the building that has smaller ceiling spans, an interior room with the greatest number of walls between the room and the exterior of the structure, and away from windows.
• Better still, if you can, get below ground in a basement.

The National Weather Service operates 122 offices in the United States. Each office has a warning coordination meteorologist who is available to help develop tornado and storm contingency plans. The National Weather Service Office nearest your worship center can be contacted via the Internet at www.nws.noaa.gov/organization.html or the local federal agency listings in your phone book. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers publications on storm response and constructing tornado shelters. FEMA can be contacted via the Internet at www.fema.gov or by phone at (202) 566-1600. To order free FEMA publications, call (800) 480-2520.

Risk Warnings

Travel Warnings

Indicate countries that are considered dangerous and travel to these areas is not recommended. Currently, Travel Warnings have been issued for 27 countries.

Public Announcements

Issued for short-term or transnational conditions including terrorist acts or bomb threats that pose risk to American travelers. Public Announcements have been issued for the Middle East, North Africa and 14 additional countries. Also, the State Department has issued a Public Announcement for Worldwide Caution to remind U.S. citizens that they “may be targets of terrorist attacks.”

continued from back
Tornadoes

"When a tornado; you can go from a sky that's empty to a storm that's twice as tall as the tallest mountains on earth, and it all will be gone in a half hour," Foster said. "Worship centers can be especially vulnerable to tornadoes because so many have large-span or vaulted roofs, and they host activities such as choir practice and potluck suppers between 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. — peak hours for a tornado to strike."

Furthermore, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday fall within the prime tornado months of March through June.

"On Palm Sunday, March 27, 1994, a powerful tornado hit the Goshen United Methodist Church in Goshen, Ala.," Foster said. "Of the small congregation, 20 people were killed and 92 were injured. It was a house of worship's worst nightmare."

Foster recommends that worship centers consider the following steps to reduce risk to their congregation should a tornado occur:

- Acknowledge the potential of a tornado and come up with a set of plans for different circumstances such as choir practice or evening services.
- Consider postponing activities when weather threatens.
- Find a place in the building that's satisfactory as a protective structure and know how you're going to move people into that shelter.
- If there is no suitable shelter, follow the weather closely and move people to a safe place well ahead of a storm — at least 30 minutes.

Global Guardian
Comprehensive travel insurance and assistance

If you sponsor foreign missions or educational programs, Global Guardian provides 24/7 travel assistance and comprehensive insurance coverage including:

- Foreign travel accident and sickness
- Foreign voluntary workers' compensation/excess repatriation and employer's liability
- Foreign commercial general liability
- Foreign commercial automobile liability

For more information, contact your Church Mutual representative at (800) 554-2642, select Option 1 when prompted.
Tornadoes

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Consular Information
Available for every country to provide contacts for the embassy or consulate and essential information about laws, health conditions, crime and security.

A Word on the Hot Middle East
In the Middle East, a pressure cooker of religious and political conflict, many countries ban missionaries who represent religions other than the faiths condoned by the government. “In general, throughout the Islamic world, proselytization for religions other than Islam is illegal,” said a foreign service officer with the State Department based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. “If one is born a Moslem (one’s father is Moslem), you are forbidden with the State Department based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. “If one is born a Moslem (one’s father is Moslem), you are forbidden to convert to another religion.”

In some of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, including United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, non-Moslems can practice Christianity. Hinduism and other religions openly, and there are public places of worship. However, no proselytization to convert others is tolerated.

General Precautions
When on mission in any foreign country, you can take a number of precautionary steps. Some, such as always being alert to what’s happening around you, may seem simplistic. Others, such as don’t get into an unmarked taxi, may seem overly cautious, but these measures are critical for one’s safety:

• Make two photocopies of your passport, airline tickets, and other travel documents. Leave one set with a family member or trusted individual and carry a spare set with you keeping it separate from the real items you are carrying. Store originals in a hotel safe.
• Know how to make an emergency call from a phone booth and carry the correct change for the call. It also can be useful to know how to make a collect call. Calling cards may be used in some countries.
• Know how to ask for help and where official assistance can be found.
• Dress inconspicuously and be sensitive to cultural or religious customs of attire.
• Avoid wearing jewelry or other items that can make you look well-off.
• Carry only the money you need, under your clothing on a belt or in a purse.
• When carrying a bag or purse, use models with long straps that can be worn across your chest.
• Avoid large crowds or demonstrations that can harbor pickpockets or where violence can escalate.
• Avoid places where Americans and other Westerners are known to congregate because of the increase in terrorist acts targeting these groups.
• Avoid going out at night; if you do, don’t go alone and steer clear of dark alleys or streets.
• Be wary of people who approach you with offers of assistance.
• Beware of pickpockets including small children who often work in teams; one person may try to distract you while another picks your pocket or bag.
• If you are threatened, don’t fight. Hand over your valuables.

Foster debunks three common tornado-related myths:

• When constructing a new facility or adding on, consider building a safe room with steel-reinforced concrete walls and no windows.
• In tornado safety, my personal credo is ‘get below ground at all cost,’” Foster said. “Flying debris, not wind, causes damage. People need to stay low.”
• If you are threatened, don’t fight. Hand over your valuables.

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A Journey of faith
Mission work in today’s world
The experience of a foreign missionary today is one of faith, unimagined reward and — too all too frequently — risk.

Consider the highly publicized and tragic story of Association of Baptists for World Evangelism Missionary Veronica ‘Ross’ Bowers, 35, and her 6-month-old daughter, Charity. They were killed on April 20, 2003, when their single-engine Cessna was fired upon by a Peruvian military plane, in a cooperative action with the CIA, who mistook the small plane for that of drug traffickers. Bowers’ husband, Jim, 38, the couple’s 6-year-old son, Cory, and the plane’s pilot, Kevin Donaldson, 42, survived the attack.

“There’s always a risk for missionaries because they tend to go to places that aren’t safe,” said Stuart Patt, spokesperson for the Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “We recommend that missionaries and their sponsors be aware of the risks posed in different areas when selecting missions.

“Colombia is the kidnapping capital of the world,” Patt said. “In the past year, 500 people have been kidnapped in Colombia for a long time, but now it’s an everyday occurrence.”

On that site, the State Department also lists the following types of warnings and announcements:

Travel Warnings
Indicate countries that are considered dangerous and travel to these areas is not recommended. Currently, Travel Warnings have been issued for 27 countries.

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