

# Emergency Planning Checklist: Israel Educational Trips

*Educational travel to Israel offers transformative experiences for participants and the broader community. However, it requires thorough preparation for potential security emergencies. This checklist distills over 20 years of practice across the field into clear, actionable steps that organizations can adapt to their needs.*

*The framework is organized into three phases: **Before the Trip (Preparation & Prevention), Emergency During the Trip (Crisis Management), and After the Trip (Recovery & Review).** Leaders can use this guide to make sound decisions, protect participants, and communicate effectively under pressure.*

*Not every element will apply to every trip. Organizations should tailor the guidance to their audience, itinerary, and operational model. Organizational leadership and board members are responsible for establishing clear emergency procedures and defining specific roles for all personnel. Well-defined roles and responsibilities are essential to effective emergency protocol.*

***In the event of a serious security emergency, IETA will be in regular communication with all of its member organizations through our newsletter distribution channel.***

*This is a resource to aid your organization in planning. **For hands-on customization support, contact [ieta@jewishfederations.org](mailto:ieta@jewishfederations.org)***

## Key Terms

**Moked Teva** ('the Situation Room'): 24/7 information center that issues daily safety directives and permits for groups during routine operations and emergencies.

**Home Front Command (HFC)**: Branch of IDF which issues civilian safety rules during emergencies (e.g., sirens, closures, shelter instructions). Their directives are binding.

**Duty of Care Lead (DCL)**: Staff member with ultimate responsibility for safety.

- **Role:** Can pause or cancel activities, order relocation, or trigger evacuation.
- **Expectations:**
  - Available 24/7 and coordinates with HQ, tour operator, and IETA.
  - Supported by two alternates (one on-site, one at HQ).
  - Keeps the official incident log (time, actions, communications).

## Before the Trip: Preparation & Prevention

### Authority & Decision-Making

- Appoint a Duty of Care Lead (DCL) and one backup.
- Define go/no-go criteria in advance. Suggested criteria:
  - **Go (proceed):** No HFC restrictions in program area; alerts limited to other regions.
  - **Modify:** HFC restricts gatherings, or multiple sirens occur in the program region in one day.
  - **Suspend:** HFC declares “Special Situation” in program area; U.S. Embassy orders shelter-in-place; program cannot reach shelters within 90 seconds.
  - **Evacuate:** Repeated strikes prevent safe sheltering; airport or border access closed for more than 48 hours; your organization’s HQ directs evacuation.

### Housing & Logistics

- Book primary accommodations in multiple regions (e.g., Jerusalem and the North).
- Confirm that all accommodations have protected spaces (mamad), and ensure staff are familiar with their locations.
- Prepare backup housing and transportation plans for each region of your trip.

### Airfare & Travel

- Identify your airline’s rebooking and emergency contact numbers.
- Determine acceptable alternate departure routes (e.g., charter options, multiple airport transfers, exits through Jordan’s Allenby crossing, etc.).

### Medical & Mental Health

- Review and understand your insurance policy’s medical coverage for evacuations, hospitalizations, etc.
- Collect all participant health and medication information in secure and easily accessible formats.
- Assign staff escorts for hospital visits.
- Train staff to provide basic mental health first aid and escalate concerns accordingly.
- Obtain signed parental medical consent and risk acknowledgment, where applicable.



## Staff & Training

- Download the Moked Teva mobile app; ensure your tour guide or operator is in daily contact with Moked Teva.
- Conduct Home Front Command drills:**
  - Direct participants to shelter within 90 seconds and remain sheltered for 10 minutes after the all-clear.
  - If outdoors, lie flat in low ground (e.g., roadside ditch) and cover head and neck; on buses, stop and shelter if possible, otherwise crouch below window line.
- Provide psychological first aid: model calm, normalize fear, offer small comforts (water, buddy system), identify ongoing distress, and escalate to professionals.
- Enforce staff-to-participant ratios, buddy system, curfews, and mandatory reporting of misconduct.
- Conduct tabletop exercises: staff walk through scenarios (e.g., bus siren, ER visit during attack, night-time alert), clarify roles and actions, and review communication protocols.

## Technology & Data

- Ensure all staff have international data plans and know how to receive HCF alerts on their phones.
- Purchase backup chargers and power banks for cell phones.
- Store offline copies of passports, visas, insurance, and medical information (both paper and secure cloud).

## Communications & Stakeholders

- Create a contact tree that includes staff, HQ, parents, funders, tour operator, Israeli partners, etc.
- Develop a communication plan specifying who will be communicated with, when, and how often.
- Prepare calm, pre-drafted holding statements for parents, funders, and media.
- Schedule regular updates for parents and funders, and provide timely information after any incident.
- Designate one authorized spokesperson for external communications.
- Prepare statements and resources for 'After the Trip,' including mental health resources.

## Coordination & Partnerships

- Verify your tour operator has a direct line to Moked Teva.
- Confirm in writing how updates will reach you through your tour operator and what thresholds trigger program changes.



## Financial Readiness

- Allocate emergency reserves for evacuation, flights, and extended stays.
- Keep a log of emergency-related costs for reimbursement and reporting.
- Review and understand your insurance policy's coverage for air travel rebooking, extended accommodations, meals, etc.

# Emergency During the Trip: Crisis Management & Operations

## Security & Safety

- Keep all activities within 90 seconds of shelter.
- Avoid crowds, protests, and high-risk targets.
- Ensure buses can reroute; avoid night travel during escalations.

## Incident Response

- On siren/alert:
  - **Indoors:** Move to shelter, stay 10 minutes after all-clear.
  - **Outdoors:** Enter nearest building; if none, lie flat, cover head and neck.
  - **Bus:** Stop and shelter in building if possible; otherwise, crouch below window line.
- Confirm headcount immediately.
- DCL logs incident, notifies HQ, and decides whether to resume, modify, or suspend.

## Communications

- Within 10 minutes of any incident:
  - Staff confirm headcount.
  - HQ notified with location/status.
  - Parents/funders receive holding message:
 

*"All participants are safe and following Home Front Command instructions. Next update in 30 minutes."*
- Keep a written/digital incident log (time, place, actions, all-clear).

## Medical & Mental Health

- Monitor hydration, sleep, and stress daily.
- Designate one staff member as the mental health contact for private check-ins.
- If an ER visit is required, one staff member escorts the participant; the rest of group remains covered.



### Operational Checkpoints (flexible, not timed)

- Security check:** Itinerary matches HFC guidance; protected spaces accessible.
- Well-being check:** Staff observe participants for distress/fatigue.
- Communication check:** Staff phones charged; HQ informed of status.
- Flexibility:** Adjust/cancel activities based on changing alerts.

### Evacuation & Suspension

- Suspend if HFC bans gatherings, multiple local alerts, or Embassy orders shelter-in-place.
- Evacuate if safe sheltering is impossible or airport/border access is shut for more than 48 hours.
- Resume only once HFC clears area and HQ authorizes.

## After the Trip: Recovery & Review

### Participant Support

- Provide structured, age-appropriate, re-entry debrief.
- Offer referrals for counseling.
- Send parents guidance on common stress reactions and coping.

### Organizational Review

- Within 2–3 weeks, hold an After-Action Review with staff and HQ.
  - After-Action Review Templates: [SmartSheet](#); [Wharton School](#); [Gates Foundation](#)
- Update protocols and clarify any failures or gaps identified.
- Share lessons with governance bodies, IETA and other partner orgs for field-wide improvement.

### Financial & Reporting

- Track all emergency-related costs.
- Submit claims for insurance reimbursement.
- Provide funders with transparent safety and outcomes report.

### Media & Public Messaging

- Issue controlled wrap-up communications to families/funders.
- Decide on any public statement, balancing transparency with privacy.



*In the case of a serious security emergency, the IETA team will use our key contacts at government of Israel agencies and the Jewish Agency for Israel to help ensure groups' safety. In such an instance, IETA will provide emergency information using our [newsletter distribution channel](#) and provide phone/WhatsApp information for immediate needs.*

## Coordinating With IETA

### Before the Trip

- Contact IETA for assistance in reviewing your organization's emergency protocols.
- Include IETA in your contact tree.

### Emergency During the Trip

- DCL informs IETA of group's location, status, and needs in the sequence outlined in your communication plan.
- Communicate coordination with government ministries or other trip partners.
- Continue ongoing communication with IETA anytime group location changes, as needs evolve, and if any incident directly related to a trip participant or staff member occurs.
- Consult with IETA on implementation of suspension or evacuation plans *after* review with your tour operator and organizational leadership.

### After the Trip

- Following internal After-Action Review, share with IETA:
  - The resolution of the emergency,
  - The status of the program,
  - Core learnings and adjustments discovered in the After-Action review.

