

The Wire...from AirPlus.

(North America Edition)

Traveler Tracking Technologies.

AIRPLUS. WHAT TRAVEL PAYMENT IS ALL ABOUT.



Travel managers say the ability to track travelers directly affects their ability to perform their job, but how to manage the tracking still presents issues.

According to a summer 2012 AirPlus International survey, the use of traveler tracking systems was the most common standard procedure in event of an emergency. (*The Wire...from AirPlus*, August 2012: Traveler Safety and Security) As risk management continues to remain top of mind and new technologies augment traveler tracking abilities, AirPlus surveyed 130 corporate travel buyers this winter to better understand how travel managers were tracking their travelers.

The vast majority of travel managers believe the ability to track travelers directly affects their ability to effectively perform their job, highlighting the increasing intersection between the corporate functions of risk and travel management. Fifty-one percent of those surveyed said the ability to track travelers has a large or major effect on their ability to perform their jobs, with another 35 percent stating it has some effect. Only 15 percent chose “no effect” or “minimal effect”.

Of note is the disconnect between the importance that travel managers place on traveler tracking and their ability to actually do such tracking: Despite the fact that 85 percent rated traveler tracking as having somewhere between “some effect” and a

For this issue of *The Wire*, AirPlus International surveyed 130 corporate travel buyers in North America from January 8 to January 11, 2013. 50% of respondents reported annual travel spend above \$10 million and 25% reported spend above \$50 million.

“major effect” on their job, only 62 percent of those surveyed are currently tracking travelers.

This margin, however, is currently in the process of narrowing: 10 percent said they do not currently track travelers, but plan to implement tracking in the next year, and another 9 percent said they are assessing traveler tracking.

Of those who are tracking travelers (or have plans in the works), 39 percent are doing so through their travel management companies (TMCs), which typically track travelers through booked travel reservations. At the next level, a TMC may also monitor ticketed transactions, which can reveal discrepancies between what was booked and what was actually executed.

Concerns about data accuracy remain, especially with respect to the timeliness of the information, as well as the difficulties that result from working with multiple TMCs and travelers who book outside preferred channels and are therefore outside of the TMC’s ability to track them. Visibility into credit card transaction fees is one way to augment the TMC information.

Another 34 percent are working with a third-party security/duty-of-care company such as iJet or International SOS to track their travelers.

Does your company track travelers?

Yes	62.0%
No	19.4%
Not currently, but we plan to implement traveler tracking in the next year	10.1%
Not currently, but we are assessing it	8.5%

Such companies receive data feeds from the TMCs to track traveler locations, including aggregating data from multiple TMCs. Additionally, they provide the expertise for companies to create and implement travel risk management strategy, from development of policy and standardized procedures through execution of assistance in an emergency. However, these companies, too, are currently hampered by access to complete data about traveler whereabouts.

A third-party technology company is another option, employed by 12 percent of the participants. While the details of what such companies can offer will vary, the mobile specialist conTgo, for example, has introduced an app that combines communication and social sharing with geo-location, requiring an opt-in from travelers to disclose their current location. The app automatically falls back to SMS whenever a WiFi, roaming or mobile voice connection is not available, providing additional backup, and is fully integrated with the company's MapCast traveler tracking system.

While tracking travelers with mobile technologies holds great potential, presently only 11 percent of the survey participants are using such technologies to track travelers. Another 6 percent plan to implement it in the next 12 months and a full 26 percent are currently researching options. Still, more than half of respondents (57 percent) are not using or planning to use such mobile technologies for traveler tracking.

While the potential of such technologies is great, the usage, ethical and legal ramifications can be tricky: Will travelers agree to be tracked if they're paying for their own phones? Should travelers be tracked at all times while traveling on business, even during their personal time? What are the parameters around geo-fencing (automatic notification to the company if a traveler enters or leaves a pre-determined location)?

The laws governing such issues are murky, and vary from country to country. As the technologies continue to become more sophisticated, there will be an increasing need for clarification of the laws and ethical

If yes, who is (will be) your primary partner for tracking your travelers?

TMC	39.0%
Third-party security/duty of care company (e.g., ISOS, iJet)	34.0%
Third-party travel technology provider (e.g., conTgo)	12.0%
Other	15.0%

Do you use mobile technologies to track travelers?

Yes	11.2%
We are planning to implement it in the next 12 months	6.4%
We are researching it	25.6%
No	56.8%

boundaries surrounding mobile tracking. In the meantime, travel managers should work closely with legal, risk management and human resources departments to protect both the company and the traveler.

Additional Resources

Traveler Tracking System Users Advocate Data Diligence

<http://www.businesstravelnews.com/Travel-Management/Traveler-Tracking-System-Users-Advocate-Data-Diligence/?a=trans>

Tracking Technology Requires Meticulous Policy Planning

<http://www.businesstravelnews.com/Worldwide-Travel/Tracking-Technology-Requires-Meticulous-Policy-Planning/?a=trans>

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https://www.airplus.com/us/en/page_131408/

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