



News Release
February 3, 2009

Media Contacts:
Pamela Davenport
(801) 468-2757
Kate Lilja
(801) 468-2268

Employers Liable for Employee Health When Traveling

Local employers encouraged to protect employee health or they may pay the price

(Salt Lake County) – The Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) is reminding local employers to take steps to protect their employee’s health before sending them abroad for work. Litigation has held that corporate travel managers and travel agents have a legal responsibility to inform business travelers of the potential health risks associated with their destination.

Risks can range from high altitude sickness to crime, but the most common health risks are easily preventable and can be avoided by simple planning.

“Traveling to a foreign country means exposure to a variety of factors and diseases not common within the United States,” says Dr. Dagmar Vitek, SLVHD Medical Director. “Even traveling to developed countries like Great Britain and Europe can expose travelers to Measles and Hepatitis. It is important for American travelers to get vaccinated and educated before they are exposed abroad.”

The SLVHD Travel Clinic provides pre-travel consultations including important information on potential health risks, personal protection measures, food and water safety tips, high altitude sickness, motion sickness, traveling while pregnant and jet lag. Targeted education about risks specific to their destination, such as the current melamine contamination in Chinese food supplies, is also provided.

In addition to education, the clinic also offers a variety of immunizations to target and prevent diseases common in countries around the world. Immunizations for Tetanus/Diphtheria and Hepatitis A are recommended for all international travelers, and Hepatitis B, Typhoid, Measles and Yellow Fever are recommended for many travelers headed abroad. Prescriptions for treatment or prevention of ailments, such as Travelers’ Diarrhea, are available.

“When people travel abroad they are at a high risk of becoming ill,” explains Vitek. “Roughly 80% of all travelers visiting lesser-developed countries will develop an illness that could have been prevented with the proper education and planning. It is important for employers to keep this in mind before sending their employees to a foreign country.”

For more information on the SLVHD International Travel Clinic, call (801) 468-2813 or visit www.slvhealth.org. An appointment is necessary.

###