

International SOS celebrates 25 years on World Tourism Day

On World Tourism Day - today, 27 September 2010 - International SOS celebrates its 25th year in business.



"With over 6000 employees in more than 70 countries serving more than 8300 corporate clients around the world, International SOS is a leading player in the global health care environment," says Dr Ian Cornish, International SOS regional managing director in Southern Africa.

"The contribution of the health care industry to global travel is evident when considering that according to our global data, business travellers undertake an average of 3,5 million international trips annually, 25% of which are to high or extreme risk destinations. With this increased mobility comes inevitable risks - exposure to illnesses like the H1N1 pandemic, outbreaks of civil unrest like the recent unrest in Mozambique and natural disasters like the floods in Monterrey in Mexico.

You can get sick on holiday

"Research also shows that of people who travel to developing countries for a month, 1 in 13 will see a doctor, 1 in 20 will be confined to bed, 1 in 2000 will be admitted to a hospital and 1 in 3300 will be evacuated. Taking all of this into account, the importance of a viable duty of care policy becomes inevitable."

International SOS is a healthcare, medical assistance and security services company. Through its worldwide network of alarm centres, clinics and health and logistics providers, the company offers local expertise, preventative advice and emergency assistance during critical illness, accidents, or civil unrest.

Recognising a need

"The company was founded in Singapore in 1985 by Dr Pascal Rey-Herme and Arnaud Vaissié, who were childhood friends. Today both still play a very active role in the day-to-day business and the growth of the company. Since the beginning, we have grown rapidly by constantly developing and responding to customer needs," says Cornish.

Working as a doctor for the French Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia in the early 1980's Rey-Herme soon recognised the great demand for international standards of healthcare from the wider expatriate community and international organisations

in the region.

Already a successful businessman, Vaissié, joined Rey-Herme to set up Asian Emergency Assistance International (AEA) in 1985. Due to its high concentration of international organisations, the first alarm centre was opened in Singapore, followed by an office and clinic in Indonesia.

In 1989 expansion followed into Greater China, establishing an alarm centre in Hong Kong and opening an office in Beijing. By 1995 new alarm centres and offices were established throughout Asia, Greater China and Vietnam, Australia and the USA.

Subsequently through internal growth and acquisitions in the US, AEA International became the worldwide leader for medical assistance services. In 1998 AEA International was renamed International SOS, as it is known today.

A world-wide net

The opening of new offices, alarm centres and clinics in Africa, the Middle East, Germany, Mongolia, India and Dubai followed in 2006. Two years later the company formed a strategic alliance with Control Risks, the world's leading risk management consultancy. MedAire, an aviation and maritime medical assistance company, also became part of the International SOS group.

"All of this we do in a biodiverse friendly manner. On local or a project-based level, we design and adapt public health programmes aligned with organisations' global health policy and standards. We conduct expert audits, health impact assessments and risk surveys for the mining and processing, manufacturing, infrastructure, and civil engineering industries.

Health impact assessment studies

"Furthermore, we offer health impact assessment studies to identify the potential impact of a specific project on the surrounding community. It provides evidence-based, actionable recommendations, assisting organisations to design projects with a minimal impact on surrounding populations. We also do occupational health assessments by evaluating local facility compliance against local and international standards.

"We are proud to be part of the global travel environment and to contribute to health in an ever-growing industry. We are also proud of our efforts to assist our clients in improving the environment in which they operate. We are critically aware that much still needs to be done, but to echo the words of the United Nation's World Tourism Organization's Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai - safeguarding biodiversity is an urgent challenge that concerns us all, but it is not too late to act," says Cornish.

About International SOS

International SOS is the world's leading international healthcare, medical assistance, and security services company. Operating in over 70 countries, International SOS provides integrated medical, clinical, and security solutions to organisations with international operations. Services include planning and preventative programmes, in-country expertise, and emergency response. A global team of over 6000 employees led by 900 full-time physicians and 200 security specialists provides health and security support to enable its members to operate wherever they work or travel. Members include 66% of the Fortune Global 500 companies.

Go to www.internationalsos.com for more.

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