

Brussels Terrorist Attack: Key Lessons Learnt from Indian Passengers by Pratima Singh

After the first bomb blast, all passengers were requested by Airport Security to surrender their hand luggage and leave it at the spot they were standing as it was considered forensic data.

Lesson: It is recommended to wear a multi- pocketed jacket which helps you to carry your valuables like passport, mobile, credit card, jewellery, cash, medicines, prescriptions etc.

Brussels Airport initiated several rapid actions in order to manage the crisis & evacuate passengers. The communication was limited based on available information at that instant. The anxiety and fear was high hence it was not clear to passengers whom to follow and who will deliver hand luggage

Lesson: Always follow the guidance of the airport authority and airlines company as they are responsible to ensure your safety. Luggage delivery is the responsibility of airline company.

Some passengers were habitual to using credit or debit card during travel. In few places food/ drinks are available only via cash/ coins. Finding a ATM in a new location was not easy especially in an emergency situation. In some cases their cards did not work.

Lesson: Always carry some emergency cash in your pockets during travel.

Some passengers kept their medicines in check in or hand luggage. Belgium was put on high security alert and flights were cancelled hence they did not have access to their medicine.

Lesson: For long journey, always carry your medicines for 2-3 days or take a photo/scan of your medicines/ medical prescription so that any doctor can assist you anywhere.

Some passengers kept their key documents like green card, permanent resident card etc. in their hand baggage which they had to leave at the airport. These are mandatory documents to enter their final destination. For all such cases most Embassy issues an Emergency Certificate.

Lesson: It is useful to know the Emergency Certificate requirements and be prepared for it always. For instance, you can carry your passport size photograph, ensure you have a scan/photo of all mandatory documents in your email, phone or with family who can support you during crisis.

Some passengers heard about the attack and panicked. They could not understand whom all to inform about the situation.

Lesson: Prepare a list of emergency contact numbers in your phone or diary of friends and family. Emergency contact groups can be created on what's app, email etc. to ensure quick communication.

Some passengers were not habitual to labelling their hand baggage hence identifying, tracking and tracing these hand baggage was a manual and tedious work for the airlines.

Lesson: Everyone must label their belongings clearly stating contact information. Take photos of your bag after you have labelled it and bag tags when you have received it. You can store these photos in your phone. All these actions help you track & trace your baggage quickly.

Some passengers could not call to inform about their safety. When they asked other passengers to borrow their phone, these passengers found it difficult to share their own limited resources due to the uncertainty and unknowns.

Lesson: Every emergency is an opportunity for us to come together as humans and lift each other up. Make sure to share whatever is in your means as a single act of kindness can boost the morale during crisis. It is during these delicate moments to demonstrate your solidarity and support.