

A behind the scenes look at SureSave's Australia-based Emergency Assistance team



Image: WE Assist team

[SureSave's](#) Australia-based Emergency Assistance service, [WE Assist](#) is celebrating four incredible years in-house. WE Assist provides SureSave travellers with support 24/7, through a team of experienced case managers and medical professionals based in Sydney. Since bringing its Emergency Assistance in-house in 2013, SureSave's WE Assist team has assisted travellers with 17,706 complex medical cases, 10,596 non-medical cases, arranged 81 air ambulance evacuations and more than 104 medically escorted repatriations.

Lisa Fryar, Head of Emergency Assistance at WE Assist, discusses her experience on the front line of emergencies, and shares her tips for travellers in need of assistance.

What it's like being on the front line

"It's tough, but also incredibly rewarding. Often, we're the first point of contact in stressful and highly emotional situations. At any given point in time, we can be managing anywhere from 45-60 cases. Of course, it can be emotionally taxing, but our main priority is ensuring the best possible outcome for the traveller. As an example, we recently had a traveller who injured herself skiing overseas, so we arranged her emergency transport to the nearest hospital for treatment. She later required support to come home to Australia safely, so I personally flew over to assist her with packing up her hotel room and escorted her home."

What kind of help can emergency assistance provide?

WE Assist provides travellers with assistance in a number of situations, from medical support and repatriation home, to coordinating urgent changes to travel plans, or guidance on arranging a replacement for a lost or stolen passport.

When it comes to medical assistance, Lisa says, having an in-house medical team of three doctors and four nurses takes assistance to a new level.

“Not every country has the same standard of care, so our Australian medical team can help monitor the care that our travellers receive overseas. It can be confusing and intimidating to be in a foreign hospital, feeling unwell and not being able to speak the language. We can access your medical reports, make sure you’re receiving appropriate treatment, and keep you informed about what’s happening and what you need to do.

For instance, we had a traveller who fell ill in India, with initial reports from the local hospital suggesting she had been intoxicated or had her drink spiked. Our medical team re-examined the medical reports, as this theory seemed to be inconsistent with the details of her trip, and the standard of care overseas is not necessarily the same as back home.

Upon investigation, it was discovered that she was in fact suffering from an acute infection and inflammation of the brain. As a result, we moved her by air ambulance to an upgraded medical facility for the appropriate treatment.”

Lisa explains that WE Assist also has an extensive network of global providers, ensuring seamless assistance and exceptional standard of care for travellers whilst overseas.

Lisa’s tips for dealing with travel emergencies

1. Prevention is better than a cure

Travellers should be aware of the potential risks (medical and otherwise) in the area they’re travelling to. Check the Smartraveller website for information, <http://smartraveller.gov.au/>. For example, if travelling to a tropical region, they should think about things like malaria and dengue fever, and take precautions against mosquito bites.

2. Contact emergency assistance sooner rather than later

Travellers can contact WE Assist in cases where they need advice, even if it’s not typically an emergency. This can include if they’re just feeling unwell and are unsure of their options. Our medical team can chat to them, assess their situation and provide advice. It’s best to act sooner than later, and it’s reassuring for travellers to know that they have that level of support from Australia.

3. Find out what documents they’ll need to claim

In many cases, travellers will be able to recoup their losses from their travel insurance. However in order to claim, they will need certain supporting documents. It’s best to confirm what these are as early as possible, so they can take the appropriate actions. For example, if their belongings are stolen, they’ll need to report it to the relevant authorities and obtain a police report. We can advise our travellers on what they’ll need to collect.

4. Take advantage of financial assistance

To avoid being out of pocket, check whether your travel insurance can assist with payments up-front. At WE Assist, provided we can confirm cover, we can help with any amount of medical expenses and make direct payments to hospitals so travellers don’t need to pay up-front. We can also facilitate direct payments with other providers like clinics, hotels, and airlines. As a guideline, we recommend that travellers contact us if their medical expenses are expected to be more than \$2,000.

5. Try not to panic

When things go awry, travellers should take a deep breath, then give us a call. In many situations, most of the stress comes from a feeling of not knowing what to do. We can help alleviate those concerns by providing advice on the next steps to take.

To find out more about SureSave's WE Assist service, visit suresave.com.au/emergency-assistance.

Notes to Editors:

SureSave is a leading travel insurance provider that offers 'help that's designed for travellers'. SureSave provides World Assistance through its agent support team, claims and in-house 24/7 Emergency Assistance operation, 'WE Assist'.

SureSave covers more than 300,000 travellers each year in Australia, is Australian owned and is a coverholder at Lloyd's.

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