

Agency briefing

Here are some tips on the things you should make sure you discuss with the agency that you are doing your placement with.

Make sure your contract includes:

Job description - as detailed as possible under the circumstances

Salary - how much, how will it be paid and where

Expenses - what expenses are reimbursable, how will they be reimbursed, will you be given an advance in headquarters and/or in the field, is a daily allowance (per diem) paid in the field, etc.

Insurance cover provided by the Agency - is it adequate?

Baggage/excess luggage allowance for the outward and return journeys

Other terms and conditions - accommodation, food, field transport, time off in the field, rest & recuperation (R&R), etc.

Find out about

Your living conditions, health considerations, local health care, personal mail and make sure you leave contact details of your next-of-kin.

From the Desk Officer/Technical Section

Safety/security situation: ask about any safety/security incidents - you can refuse if you feel the risk is too great

Safety/security plan - obtain details of any safety/security plan, including evacuation arrangements.

Find out who is responsible for safety/security in the team.

Country - geography, climate, politics, economics, social situation, location of work, road conditions, language (basic greetings), introduction to key cultural issues, type of clothes to wear, photography, maps etc.

Assignment - description, background, responsibilities, reporting lines, technical information, logistical and financial systems and constraints.

Ask for copies of latest situation reports.

Is there a hand-over report from your predecessor?

Are all the manuals, spare parts lists, tools and equipment necessary to do your job available on the ground?

Agency - mandate, policies, local team structure and members, methods of reporting, communications, policies relating to the media, issues of conscience, rules of conduct.

Travel

Entry visas and travel tickets - check baggage restrictions and allowances (there and back)

Driving license - is your national license valid in the assignment country or do you need an International Driving License?

Letters of introduction, Ordres de Mission, etc.

Check baggage restrictions, requirements and allowances - pack/unpack accordingly!

Identity card(s)

Medical evacuation cards

Information required by immigration on arrival: contact name and address in country, job details, money etc.

From the Accounts Department

Advance for expenses or advance against per diem

Expense forms and procedures

Provide bank details for salary and expense payments

Health

Health considerations for the region

Have there been any health issues in the team

Pre-departure medical examination (including a chest X-ray)

Some agencies ask for or recommend a HIV test - check their policy

Malaria prophylaxis and treatment, impregnated mosquito net, other special medicines etc

Ask for their basic medical or field First Aid kit