



Module 2 Learning Unit 10

Handling unforeseen situations



Games Without Barriers

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Even a very carefully planned trip may encounter problems which could not be foreseen at the moment of booking, travelling or stay at the final destination of a tourist with specific access needs.

When travelling with a disability a tourist has to be well prepared to face any sort of accidents to his equipment or realities which prove to be far from what had been promised by the travel agents and or the trip organisers.

There might be exceptional events, both of private nature (being injured during the trip and needing medical care) or of more general nature such as dramatic natural events or situations of social unrest, which might need to secure the safety of the customer and prevention of personal damages.

Even if planned with the utmost care and detail, information gathered before leaving are many times not precise enough if not absolutely wrong, habits and/or legislation in the destination do not grant the same equality experiences people get at home, service providers staff is not trained enough to be able to put things right.

The major burden to avoid or solve uncomfortable situations lies on staff: they have to know what to do in any critical situation, how the service they are offering is linked or depends on other elements of the Tourism Service Chain, how to interact with public or private bodies who may grant a solution, but most of all be fully aware of the needs of their potential customers.

Cooperation with the customer in identifying a solution which may be accepted is essential.

Staff resources, from the Management to the provision of any specific task have to know how the customer's trip has been organised, who has been/ is responsible for the correct delivery of his part of competence and know how to contact bodies external to the Tourism sector such as hospitals, insurance companies, police departments and Tourism public organisations which are institutionally deputed to intervene if specific situations or criticalities will occur.

Unforeseen situations may be divided into various main groups:

1. Events affecting the customer independence such as loss or damage of technical aids, no replacements or spare parts available, no renting opportunities, refusal to accept service animals inside the tourist facilities. Cancellation or delaying of services which might endanger the smooth prosecution of the whole journey.
In such cases it is important to search for alternatives and be prepared to cover possible additional costs.
As far as service animals are concerned, any service provider had to refer to the local authority capable of having the law respected.
2. Logistic situations which prevent the customer to use in complete comfort(accessibility, usability) the booked facilities such as accommodation structures whose arrangements are totally or partially not respondent to the specific access needs of the customer. It is important to consider that all the facilities of a hotel (bedroom,

restaurant, lift, bathroom, spas, swimming pool, conference room etc) have to be usable without creating problems of access or embarrassing situations.

If, for any reason, what has been booked and paid for will prove not adequate, the facility management has to find a suitable alternative, offer it to the customer and wait for his/her approval. Possible additional costs have to be covered, either from the facility itself or the Travel agent/ online booking service through which the service has been organised

3. Medical and health problems. Each tourist is normally travelling with a stock of medicines/drugs they might need during the whole journey. They may also have a medical insurance which covers major medical needs when travelling, including the possibility to go back home in an emergency.

Some unforeseen situations may however occur during the travel:

- a) Getting ill
- b) Being injured when using public transport, or in the room itself, or during sightseeing
- c) Emergency evacuations for fire or gas leaks, earthquakes, floods etc.
- d) Having an allergic reaction to food, in case of severe intolerance

In all these cases it is important to call immediately a doctor, an ambulance if the situation is very serious and organise the transfer to the nearest hospital.

Consequently all reference numbers and contact persons to whom intervention has to be requested, must be at the immediate disposal of the service provider's staff.

Even if trained in the basics of first.aid it is better to wait for the doctors and medical assistants.

When an evacuation is required, do not move the customer yourself and this might be against some national laws.

It will be also important to check the conditions of any Health Insurance, its coverage and rules applicability in the country.

In general some golden rules will be:

- Be aware of all the details of the customer journey and have the contacts of all relevant agents providing each component of the travel
- Keep calm, analyse the situation, listen to the customer and reassure him that you are there to solve the problem. Remember that a solution has to be identified
- Be prepared to start the emergency procedures as soon as possible and connect with the right people and organisation which will help you to find a solution



M2 LU1 Handling unforeseen situations

Facing unforeseen situations and handling them so that the customer will not suffer any discomfort is part of the level of quality in the service that each tourism operator, either public or private, is aiming at.

Human resources are an essential component of the quality offer and their commitment has to be valued as an important asset for the benefit of their business.

