

Financial Security

This year the Mentoring Committee will publish a series of teaching topics to help our new crewmembers with their transition into Atlas. The aim is to cover common questions that pilots have in their first year as Atlas pilots. For questions or suggestions, please contact mentoring@iap2750.org

This week's topic is Financial Security:

As far as your financial security on the road we can identify three threats:

1. Theft of debit or credit cards
2. Skimming banking information through unsafe Wi-Fi connections
3. Skimming of your physical card

The above threats have their own specific counter tactics as well as sharing a couple a couple of common-sense counter measures. Consider splitting the contents of your wallet between "at home" use and "on the road" use.

Theft

Most people carry their entire life in their wallet. Multiple debit cards and credit cards, insurance cards, membership cards, driver's license, business cards etc. Consider putting together a travel wallet with only the essentials.

Travel Wallet

- Debit or credit card from a separate account
- ID
- Insurance card

Debit or Credit Card

Consider opening a separate bank account for travel expenses with a separate debit card and/or credit card. This way in the case of theft the perpetrators only have access to whatever you deposited for your expected expenses for the trip or for the month and not the debit or savings accounts your family may rely on. I prefer a debit card with pin rather than a credit card as the debit card can also be used for foreign ATM use without excessive fees. You may want to leave a credit card for emergency use in your flight bag at your hotel.

ID

Should you have to contact law enforcement regarding theft, expect them the officers to require proof of identity. The recommended choice would be either your state driver's license or a US passport card. Note that your driver's license may not meet the ID requirements of some foreign countries, accordingly a passport card might be a good idea.

Insurance Card

Lastly, an insurance card would make a good addition in a travel wallet in the event of an unforeseen medical issue.

Fortunately, many foreign cities are safer than some of our domestic overnights as far as crime statistics. Before the recent troubles, Hong Kong was statistically one of the safest cities in the world.

Unsafe Wi-Fi Connections.

Wi-Fi Networks are a common source of theft. The use of a VPN is highly recommended, especially for crewmembers without an international data plan as they “hop” between public networks. If the concept is new to you, a VPN is a program which will encrypt your data when on a network, this makes it so anyone who attempts to listen into the traffic is unable to. A common example takes a Starbucks with public, unprotected Wi-Fi. A fairly simple program can be written to “listen” into data packets on the frequency where valuable information could be read in plain text. A VPN is able to encrypt this data so the same program would only see a seemingly random series of numbers and letters.

Fortunately, VPNs are relatively inexpensive, some are available for as little as \$3/month and the subscription includes multiple devices. VPNs work on phones, laptops, and tablets and are often done handled all within a simple app.

Avoid the use of public computers, especially for any banking means, this includes hotel computers. These computers have unknown security statuses and could be tracking keystrokes and information. Additionally, do not use USB ports in hotels or airports to charge your smart phone. Use the power plug that was originally provided with your device, or reputable replacements bought from domestic sources. Lastly, turn off Bluetooth when you are in public and not using it.

Skimming of Your Card

Lately thieves have begun to put skimmers on devices such as ATMs, gas machines, and even restaurant card readers. These “skim” your data and allows it to be read by a someone else. To minimize this, only use your card where it reputable, otherwise consider cash. Keep your receipts and keep an eye on your credit and/or debit card purchases through secure means (VPN). Some cards allow you to get card notifications via text.

Keep phone numbers to your banking institution handy in case of any unforeseen problems, and consider signing up for a credit monitoring program.