



## Norway 2011 Crime and Safety Report

Riots/Civil Unrest; Crime; Terrorism

Europe > Norway > Oslo

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### **Overall Crime and Safety Situation**

#### *Crime Threats*

Norway still has a relatively low level of crime in comparison to the United States and Western European countries with large populations. However, over the last several years and in certain areas of Norway, especially in the Oslo Metropolitan area, there have been steep increases in residential and office burglaries and petty thefts. Police attribute the steep increase in residential burglaries to criminals coming from Eastern Europe. Petty crime is attributed in part to youth gangs, drug addicts, as well as those coming from Eastern Europe. In Oslo and the other major urban areas, crime has predictably been centered in the inner city and high transit areas. However, some of the recent residential burglary waves have also targeted bedroom communities of Oslo. As in any other Western country, especially in urban areas, the exercise of basic security awareness is prudent and called for. The majority of the criminal cases reported to the police continue to be theft-related incidents. Although rare, but growing in frequency and receiving intense media coverage, are violent and weapons-related crimes. These crimes usually occur in areas known to have drug trafficking and gang problems, such as certain parts of eastern Oslo. Reports have shown an increase in rape in Norway, with parts of eastern Oslo, such as Grünerlokke, being an area of particular concern when it comes to this violent crime. Tourists and other short-term visitors should be aware that instances of pick-pocketing and petty theft are predictably common in the major tourist areas, hotel lobbies, in the train and transit stations, and in surrounding areas.

#### *Road Safety*

The climate in Norway causes occasional problems for the traveler. Some mountain roads are closed from late fall to late spring due to blockage by snowfall or danger of avalanches. Also, icy road conditions are a concern throughout Norway during the winter. Spring flooding can create traffic delays. Mountain roads are narrow and winding. In Oslo and the other large

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cities, air pollution in the winter months is prevalent (said in large part to be caused by the use of studded tires on the asphalt) and can affect those with asthma or other respiratory problems. Oslo has lowered speed limits in the city to alleviate this. There is a relative scarcity of freeways in Norway, and the roads are often narrow with numerous ongoing repair projects underway. Despite this, traffic accidents are generally low in comparison to Western Europe. Transportation of all forms is generally considered reliable and safe.

### **Political Violence**

#### *Historical perspective*

The overall threat facing Americans from political violence is low. However, there were a number of uncharacteristically violent protests in Oslo in late December 2008 and early January 2009, none of which directly affected the U.S. Embassy but were largely organized against the Israeli invasion of Gaza. These demonstrations were held either near the Israeli Embassy, which is close to the U.S. Embassy, or in the central parts of downtown Oslo. Several of these demonstrations saw tear gas deployed by the police. On two occasions, demonstrations broke out into riot situations that saw attacks on police with rocks thrown, fireworks (rockets) aimed at police, and the smashing of police vehicles, largely by ethnic youth with connections to Muslim countries. Additionally, at least five McDonald's restaurants were damaged by rioters. Those committing the vandalism had apparently received SMS text messages indicating that McDonald's was financially supporting Israel. One McDonald's restaurant was broken into after the riots had dispersed and the store was closed. A failed attempt was made to ignite a fire using a flammable liquid.

Anti-American sentiments can best be characterized as small, planned, generally peaceful demonstrations against a particular U.S. policy. For instance, demonstrations have focused on the U.S. policy regarding Palestinian and Israeli issues, U.S. military action in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, and capital punishment in the U.S. These protests have generally been staged at the American Embassy or in the central areas of Oslo. Again, these protests have been against a specific official U.S. Government position and have not targeted U.S. citizens. Most of these demonstrations are by far left-wing groups. Norwegian police are assigned to all known demonstrations and have special units on-call, twenty-four hours a day. There is no threat from war and/or civil unrest.

#### *Regional terrorism and organized crime*

There are no known indigenous or regional terrorists groups within Norway. However, in July 2010, three Norwegian residents were arrested on terrorism charges. One of these three has Norwegian citizenship. All three originally came from central Asia. Press reports indicate the

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three were involved in a plot to construct hydrogen peroxide bombs for a target that has yet to be identified clearly. In 2006, there was an instance of some Norwegians of immigrant descent with terrorist leanings who made threats against the American embassy. No convictions came from the threat against the embassy, but one person out of the group was charged with firing a weapon into an unoccupied synagogue in Oslo.

Organized crime does exist but on a small scale. Drug trafficking, petty theft, and home burglary rings typify organized crime in Norway, which is often associated within immigrant youth or transiting criminal rings from Eastern Europe.

#### *International terrorism or transnational terrorism*

Like much of Western Europe, and also the rest of Scandinavia, Norway has open borders. Norway is part of the Schengen agreement. When crossing by land between Sweden and Norway it is not likely that one will ever have to stop or show any identification. Because of the ease of travel to Norway, it is possible for any threat that exists in any other part of the EU to enter Norway. In 2010, there were a few reports of terrorist actions or plots in the neighboring countries of Denmark and Sweden, all involving people with some apparent ties to jihadist based groups or thinking.

#### *Civil unrest*

Norway is an almost universally peaceful nation, with law abiding citizens. Exceptions can be found but always by special interest groups, such as the immigrant youth violence mentioned earlier. Also, far left wing protestors have attempted to disrupt high-level meetings, such as a NATO ministerial meeting in 2007 in which police had to respond with tear gas. Strikes, protests, and other labor actions are generally announced through the media ahead of time and are usually of limited duration.

#### **Post-Specific Concerns**

There are occasional problems with flooding and landslides in certain remote area of Norway. A larger issue is heavy winter snowfall in the mountainous areas of Norway.

#### *Drug and Narcoterrorism*

There are no known issues with Narcoterrorism. Drug problems within Norway are increasingly becoming similar to what is seen in other Western European nations. At night, especially on the weekend, open drug use can be seen. Open drug use by heroin addicts can be seen in downtown Oslo, especially near the main train station. As a result, other types of criminal activity have increased in these areas.

#### **Police Response**

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The police emergency number throughout Norway is 112.

#### *How to handle incidents of police detention or harassment*

Travel in all areas of Norway is considered safe, and the Norwegian Police can be counted on to provide adequate services to foreigners during their stay in the country. The Norwegian Police are generally responsive, professional, and cooperative. Law enforcement personnel in Norway are well trained and almost all speak fluent English. Their emergency response time is good, and their equipment is excellent. Uniformed police patrol by foot, motorcycle, bicycle, horse, and car. Usually, police do not carry firearms. Norwegian Police have a counter-terrorism squad that consists of specially trained officers who can respond immediately to large-scale emergency situations. Persons detained by the Norwegian Police cannot be held for more than four hours without being formally charged with a crime. Free legal advice is available. The Norwegian legal system is similar to that of the U.S. American citizens who are detained by law enforcement authorities should request immediate notification to the American Embassy. Official corruption is rare and punishable under Norwegian law. Police traditionally do not come to the scene of a routine non-violent crime such as non-injury vehicle accident. Persons involved in an accident involving an injury must call the police and those involved should not move the vehicles before police arrive. Persons should fill in the Norwegian accident report but should not discuss guilt and not drink alcohol for 12 hours. Norway has restrictive laws regarding driving while under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. Do not drink and drive. Norwegian law prescribes heavy penalties for even a low blood alcohol level (0.2 per thousand). Police checkpoints inspecting for drivers under the influence of alcohol are routine.

#### **Medical Emergencies**

##### *Contact information for local hospitals and clinics*

Emergency medical assistance is widely available and emergency room care is generally of high quality and for the most part equivalent to U.S. standards. The ambulance emergency number throughout Norway is 113.

##### *Air ambulance services*

Air ambulance service, as well as ambulance service by boat (applicable to those in outlying islands), is available. After the 113 medical emergency number is called, officials will make the determination if and when such air and boat ambulance services are warranted.

#### **How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

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Most hotels and tourist areas are located only a walking distance from what can be considered inner city (East Oslo) higher crime areas, making instances of property crime and/or petty theft more likely to occur. Travelers are urged to use their hotel safes or safe deposit boxes and to carry limited amounts of cash and valuables. Exercising common sense and good judgment can best ensure personal safety. As in any overseas environment, American citizens should maintain a low profile and avoid wearing items that readily identify them as American citizens. Private security companies are prevalent in Norway and can be seen performing their duties in train stations, shopping malls, and movie theaters. Some examples of these companies in Norway are Securitas and G4S. The private security companies are considered professional but often suffer high employee turnover rates due to relatively low pay and limited room for employee advancement. Any private security company must be authorized by the government of Norway and guards must go through proscribed training before they can perform any security guard services.

Areas close to and immediately east of the main train station in downtown Oslo have higher instances of open drug use and crime in general, especially at night. Exercising security awareness, as one would in large metropolitan area of the US, will serve the visitor well.

#### **Further Information**

##### *Embassy contact numbers*

The U.S. Embassy in Oslo is located near the Royal Palace at Henrik Ibsens gate 48  
Operator telephone (47) 2130-8550 and fax (47) 2243-0777; This number will ring over to the Marine Post One after hours.

Consular Section telephone (47) 2130-8715 and fax (47) 2256-2751

Foreign Commercial Service telephone (47) 2130-8866 and fax (47) 2255-8803

Regional Security Office telephone (47) 2130-8972 and fax (47) 2130-8920

#### **OSAC Country Council**

Norway's Country Council is jointly administered through the RSO and the head of the American Chamber of Commerce in Norway. For further information about OSAC in Norway contact the RSO in Oslo at [47] 2130-8972. The Norway Country Council is also part of the Nordic Regional Council.

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