



Czech Republic 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Burglary; Cyber; Riots/Civil Unrest; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Czech Republic; Europe > Czech Republic > Prague

2/9/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Violent or confrontational crime is rare in the Czech Republic. The most common crimes are theft and other economically-motivated offenses. Visitors are most likely to face petty street crime, particularly pickpocketing. These incidents frequently occur in crowded tourist locations. Pickpockets may operate in groups or as individuals. Members of these rings can vary in age, gender, and appearance. For example, RSO Prague received reports of pickpockets operating while dressed in business attire, posing as panhandlers, carrying babies, and posing as tourists. Criminals rarely use violence or the threat of violence to perpetrate the crime. The victim is often distracted on the street or jostled on a crowded tram while their wallet, cell phone, or other valuables are stolen. There are also recent reports of purse snatching and handbags being subtly lifted off chairs while victims are seated at restaurants and cafes. Most victims of pickpockets report being unaware of the incident taking place and realize it only after the fact. As the individuals may operate in groups and could be

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armed with simple weapons, victims should avoid direct confrontation with potential criminals.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are widely available throughout major cities in the Czech Republic. An offer to change money by an unknown person on the street is most likely tied to a scam. Almost all ATMs have multilingual instructions and allow access to U.S. bank accounts. There are multiple, ongoing investigations into groups illegally obtaining users' ATM card numbers and PIN codes by electronically "skimming" the information from victims' cards at public ATMs. Card skimming involves the attachment of electronic devices on or around the ATM for in order to capture the magnetic strip data contained on the back of a debit card, as well as the user's PIN. This activity has reportedly occurred at ATMs in public areas, including in bank lobbies covered by security cameras and even at card access points to enter lobbies. Some ATMs have a green translucent security device at the card input, which is designed to inhibit the installation of an illegal skimming device. Although not beyond compromise, the machines with these security enhancements are more secure than standard ATMs.

Auto thefts and break-ins are common, especially in major cities (Prague). Vehicles are stolen for re-sale or for dismantlement and sale of parts locally or abroad. The Czech Republic also serves as a transit route for stolen cars from Western Europe. The recovery rate of stolen vehicles, as with most stolen property, is extremely low.

Bars and dance clubs are generally safe for the vast majority of visitors. Further, tourists may be targeted for pickpocketing while in popular and crowded venues. "Date rape" drugs (Rohypnol) have also been used at local bars and clubs, often reportedly to disable victims for robbery and/or sexual assault.

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Even though the Czech Republic has a relatively low crime rate compared to other European countries, there has been a surge of residential burglaries in recent years. Individuals should be proactive in their personal security at their residence or hotel. It is extremely important, however, that all members of a household know where the door keys are kept in case they need to leave the home quickly (as in a fire or other emergency). In many residential neighborhoods in Prague, it is common for vagrants to panhandle or beg for gratuities, especially during December and January.

Cybersecurity Issues

Parliament passed Act No. 181 (Act on Cyber Security), which provided a road map for the development of cyber capability in the Czech Republic. The act defines necessary developments from 2015 to 2020 and gives specific authority and responsibility to various organizations. The Czech NSA (NBU) was given responsibility for cyber security, which was defined as the securing and protection of government and critical infrastructure computers and networks. Responsibility for investigation and mitigation of cyber incidents was given to the police. As of 2016, agencies with cyber responsibility have organized departments and begun to build their capability. The NBU has a new facility dedicated to cyber security in Brno and is working on its staffing. The police have established a National Cyber division within the police and are working on their staffing. Over the next four years, 195 cyber-trained employees are expected to be hired.

Other Areas of Concern

Many of the popular tourist locations (Charles Bridge, Wenceslas square, Old Town square) are favored haunts of pickpockets and scam artists. Special caution is warranted when using

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public transportation, including at the station/stop and while actually riding the metro, trams, and/or buses. Travelers transiting the country on trains (particularly the Prague-Vienna route) have reported surreptitious thefts of bags and valuables and should use extra caution.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the U.S. The information below is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Although road fatalities are low according to Czech safety experts, caution must still be exercised, and drivers must remain vigilant. Driving speeds on European highways are higher than in the U.S., and drivers are expected to stay in the right lane except when passing. Highways generally meet European standards; however, on two-lane roads, drivers should be prepared to encounter uneven surfaces, irregular lane markings, and unclear sign placements. Streets in towns are not always in good condition. You should pay special attention to driving on cobblestone and among streetcars in historic city centers, especially in wet or icy conditions. Traffic lights are placed before the intersection, so be aware of where you stop at signaled intersections. Speed limits are 50 km/h (31 mil/h) in towns, 90 km/h (55mil/h) outside of towns, and 130 km/h (80 mil/h) on highways, but drivers routinely flout the limits.

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An International Driving Permit (IDP), available from AAA (in the U.S. only), must accompany a U.S. driver's license; failure to have the IDP with a valid license may result in denial of an insurance claim after an accident. Persons driving into the Czech Republic should be aware that a toll sticker is required to drive legally on major highways. Signs stating this requirement are posted near the border but are easy to miss. The stickers are available at most gas stations. The fine for failing to display a toll sticker is assessed on the spot. Czech law requires that drivers have their headlights on when driving. The law also requires that all private cars, including those of foreign visitors, carry each of the following items: fluorescent green high visibility safety jacket, first aid kit, spare pair of prescription glasses kept in the glove compartment (if necessary), warning triangle, and complete set of spare bulbs. For specific information concerning requirements for driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Czech Tourist Authority offices in New York at (212) 288-0830 or by email. Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information. Also, we suggest that you visit the website of the Czech Republic's national tourist office and the Ministry of Transport.

Czech law allows for breathalyzer testing of drivers stopped by local law enforcement officials for any reason. There is a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol and driving; driving with any trace of detected alcohol, however slight, is illegal, and those caught usually face immediate fines and possible criminal proceedings.

U.S. citizens have reported instances of motorists stopped on the shoulders of highways waving at drivers as if they needed assistance. Some drivers have reported being pressured into giving money to the person who has purportedly broken down, and it was unclear in those situations if the motorist was truly in need or trying to scam those who stopped to offer assistance.

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Travelers should use parking garages and some type of anti-theft device to discourage these incidents. Never leave anything of value unattended in a vehicle and certainly not in plain sight due to the risk of theft. Make sure all doors and windows are locked before leaving vehicles in parking areas. Keep your doors locked and windows closed (residence and vehicle). Check the interior and exterior of your vehicle prior to getting into your vehicle. Look for things that are irregular or abnormal. Identify and report vehicles or persons possibly involved in surveillance of your activities. In traffic, always attempt to leave space in which to maneuver. Always leave yourself an exit. Be prepared to take evasive action at any time. Avoid choke points in travel. Be wary of diversions. If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility to call the police. Never lead the person back to your home or stop and get out.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation is considered safe and reliable, but awareness for pickpockets is encouraged. Passengers on public transportation should buy a ticket prior to boarding to avoid being fined. The ticket must be validated at the outset of the trip by inserting it into the yellow box found on trams and buses and in the entry halls of Metro stations. In Prague, ticket offices are located in many Metro stations. Tickets can also be purchased at tabak shops (cigarettes stands), newspaper stands, post offices, and from vending machines at all metro stations and at major tram stops. Those travelers who do not validate their tickets face the possibility of encountering an inspector at any time. The transportation inspectors operate in plain clothes, but should display a small metal badge (emblazoned with the words "Prepravní Kontrola") when inspecting travelers' tickets. Fines range from 50 to 950 CZK, but the standard on-the-spot payment for traveling without a valid ticket is 800 CZK. Inspectors should provide a receipt upon payment.

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Taxis are clearly marked. Visitors should be alert to the potential for substantial overcharging by taxis, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Some taxi drivers may charge unsuspecting foreigners substantially more than the standard rate. U.S. Embassy personnel are encouraged to use reputable taxi firms. The best approach for obtaining a taxi is to call the company directly rather than hail one on the street. This ensures the ride is logged through the company's dispatcher. Taxis should be clearly marked (ideally with a permanently installed roof lamp and taxi sign) and must list the driver's personal information, with the registration number, company name, and price list clearly displayed on the front doors. Taxi drivers should use a taxi meter and provide a receipt (from the meter) upon completion of the trip. Visitors may also obtain a taxi at one of the "Fair Place" taxi stands regulated by the Prague municipality. The main taxi stand at Prague Ruzyne Airport has generally proven to be reliable. Clearly marked taxis service the stand. Visitors should avoid using taxis managed by individuals who approach them inside the airport or away from the main taxi queue. Fares from the airport to the city center should cost approximately 600CZK or less.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Czech Republic's air carrier operations.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

The risk of terrorism is relatively low. However, the Czech Republic's open borders with its neighbors allow for the possibility that terrorist groups may enter or transit the country undetected.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Civil disorder is rare, although strikes and demonstrations may occur. Authorities are generally well-prepared and handle the disruptions in a professional manner. One should be vigilant in protecting one's security, bearing in mind that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful may turn violent and should be avoided whenever possible.

Post-specific Concerns

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Privacy Concerns

The Czech Republic prioritizes its citizens privacy and affords strict protections to them with its privacy laws.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Travelers to Prague will find it one of the most LGBTI-friendly cities in central Europe. There is a comparatively large gay community in the city, centered in the Vinohrady district, with several openly gay venues catering to the local LGBTI clientele. In contrast, outside of Prague—particularly in small towns—views are relatively conservative, and open displays of affection by same-sex couples are less common. LGBTI travelers should use discretion when traveling in these areas. Please see the section of this report on crime and night life in the Czech Republic, as it applies equally to LGBTI establishments.

Individuals may find accessibility and accommodation very different from the U.S. The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services; the government generally enforces these provisions. Most buses and new tram cars are configured for special needs access, but only 60 percent of Prague's metro stations are accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessibility outside of Prague is generally less available.

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Drug-related Crimes

Drug-related crimes lean toward petty theft and are generally non-confrontational in nature. However, tourists may be approached to purchase illicit drugs in bars or nightclubs. Although enforcement may vary, commerce in illegal substances is against the law.

Police Response

While you are traveling in the Czech Republic, you are subject to local laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the U.S. If you break laws in the Czech Republic, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If you are arrested, authorities are required to notify the U.S. Embassy in Prague of the arrest of a U.S. citizen. If you are concerned the Embassy may not be aware of your situation, you should request that the police or prison officials notify the U.S. Embassy.

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Crime Victim Assistance

Victims of crime abroad should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy. The Embassy can:

Replace a stolen passport during regular business hours;

help visitors find appropriate medical care for violent crimes (assault, rape);

put visitors in contact with the appropriate police authorities;

contact family members or friends;

help visitors understand the local criminal justice process; and

provide visitors with a list of local attorneys, although local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line is 112 with personnel having English language capabilities .

Police/Security Agencies

Czech Republic National Police Force

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Local City Police Forces – Mestska Police

In an emergency: Dial 112

Medical Emergencies

While significant differences do exist between American and Czech medical systems, many outdated misconceptions and fears about post-communist medical systems may still linger. The Czech medical system is no longer entirely socialized. It is partially government-run and partially private, and there are a number of Western-trained doctors operating in Prague. While medical facilities may seem worn and outdated to the average American, the staff does maintain a standard of cleanliness (for example, many require that you wear disposable shoe coverings in the hospitals). The Czech philosophy of medical care and the doctor-patient relationship tend to be more European in approach. That is, the doctor will be less likely to share information about the patient's condition with the patient than is generally the case in the U.S. This is a cultural difference and not a deficiency in medical care. The medical system is very segmented. There is no one central emergency room, so emergencies are often sent to the facility that treats the specific medical condition (i.e., broken noses are sent to the ear, nose, and throat facility). Also, it is not uncommon to find closed doors (where you would knock or ring for service) rather than an open nursing station.

Life-threatening emergencies in Prague and Brno should be dealt with by calling Záchranná Služba ("emergency services") by dialing 112. Please specify that a physician is needed.

The emergency services physician will generally send the patient by ambulance to the nearest hospital best equipped to deal with the specific type of emergency. Patients can always

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request to be moved to a different health facility after their condition has stabilized. Charges will be incurred for services. Please note that transportation to the health care facilities is not free. Payment in cash will be requested by the ambulance crew (aprox. USD 200; credit cards are also accepted).

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Disclaimer: This list of medical providers is provided solely as information for American citizens. It is not meant to be exhaustive or definitive, nor does it represent either a guarantee of competence or endorsement by the Department of State or the U.S. Embassy. This list does not include all medical facilities/providers in Prague. The ones included here do cater to foreigners and speak at least some English.

Emergencies: Prague

Motol Hospital

U Uvalu 84

Prague 5

224-433-681 Adults

224-433-690 Children

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American patients are requested to approach the hospital through the Foreigners' department:

Mon-Fri 7 am – 9 pm and Sat-Sun 8 am – 9 pm; 24-hour Trauma facility adult and pediatric care, 24-hour care for major and minor trauma, illness. Has surgery capability, lab, and other diagnostic testing equipment, including CT and MRI. There is an English speaking representative available 24 hours/day upon request. Accepts Visa, MasterCard, Amex, and Diners Club.

Na Homolce Hospital

Roentgenova 2, Prague 5

Switchboard: 420 257 271 111

American patients are requested to approach the hospital through the Foreigners' department: Mo-Fri 7am-4:30pm. No 24-hour emergency care. Not for major trauma. Accepts Visa, Mastercard

Prague Central Military Hospital

U vojenské nemocnice 1200

Prague 6

Phone: 973 203 023 (our POC)

24-hour emergency facility. major trauma center. Has isolation unit, surgery capability, lab, diagnostic testing equipment (CT, MRI). There is an English speaking representative available 24 hours/day upon request.

Fakultní Nemocnice Královské Vinohrady

Šrobárova 50, Prague 10

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Phone: 267 161 111

Emergency room, adult/pediatric burn center for the Czech Republic, plastic surgery clinic.

Fakultní Nemocnice Bulovka

Budínova 2, Prague 8

Phone (Call Center): 266 081 111

Emergency kids: 266 084 220

Emergency adults: 266 082 017

Emergency room, orthopedic surgery, infectious diseases clinic, etc. Accepts payment by Visa, and has an ATM that accepts Cirrus, MasterCard, and American Express.

Institute of Clinical and Experimental Medicine (IKEM)

Videnska 1958

Krc, Prague 4

Phone: 236 051 111

Cardiac Unit Emergency: 236 053 002

Invasive cardiology with cardiovascular surgical support. English speaking medical staff for the most part.

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Dental Emergencies:

American Dentist in Prague

Pštrossova 10

110 00 Prague 1

Phone: (+420) 773 505 773

Email: info@americandentist.cz

Website: www.americandentist.cz

Hours: 0800-1900 hours M-Th

Medical Emergencies

Dental Office

Hvezdova 33

140 21 Prague 4

Phone: (+420) 241 410 001

(+420) 733 737 337

Email: info@dental-office.cz

Website: www.dental-office.cz/en

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Hours: 0800-2000 M-Th

Emergencies: Brno

Ambulance 112

Research Institute of Traumatology(Ústav Traumatologický)

Ponavká 8

Phone: 545 538 111

Faculty Children Hospital (Fakultní Detská Nemocnice)

ernopolní 9

Phone: 545 122 111

First Aid, Dental, Eye Emergencies: 545 541 111

Bratislavská 2

Non-Emergency Care

PolyClinic Narodní

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Národní tída 9, Prague 1

Dr. Šašek — Emergency: 777 942 270, 222 075 101

Website: www.poliklinika.narodni.cz

Medical clinic offering general medical care as well as specialized care for adults and children. Run by U.S. Board Certified Physicians. 24-hour emergency service including direct hospital care. Preventive care, home visits, on-site laboratory, all medical staff fluent in English. Accepts major credit cards.

Unicare Medical Center

Dr. Julia Concha (Pediatrician)

Na Dlouhem lanu 11, Prague 6

24-hour emergency: 602-201-040; 608 10 30 50

Family oriented medical center offering comprehensive medical and dental services. Center has two locations, Prague 6 and Prhonice. Provides English speaking physicians in a variety of specialities. Will arrange diagnostic tests, X-ray on the compound, can assist with local hospitalization as needed. Accepts major credit cards.

Website: www.unicare.cz

Canadian Medical Care

Veleslavínská 1, Tel: 235-360-133

V Parku 2308/8, Tel: After-hours adults 724 300 301

162 02 Prague 6, Tel: Pediatrician 724 300 303

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Website: www.cmcpraha.cz

Well-established private outpatient medical clinic providing high quality health care to all foreign residents, visitors to Prague, and Czech citizens who desire above-standard medical services. English speaking medical staff, primary health care for people of all ages, referral to specialists is required, 24-hour on call service. Major credit cards accepted.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/czech-republic>.

OSAC Country Council Information

Information on the Country Council in the Czech Republic can be found at: <http://Prague.OSAC.gov>. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

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Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Embassy Address is Trziste 15, 118 01 Praha 1

Hours of Operation are from 0800 to 1630 Mon-Fri.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Switchboard: 420-257-022-000

Website: <https://cz.usembassy.gov/>

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Shop before dark and park in a well-lighted area. Coordinate shopping trips with friends and limit time walking alone. Do not loiter in parking areas while holding shopping packages. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash while shopping. Minimize your public profile, especially if you stand out as a foreigner or as a person with wealth. Emotionally disturbed persons and persons intending to engage in fights are especially apt to target people who draw undue

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attention to themselves by flaunting material possessions or by acting in loud manner.

Exercise heightened vigilance and be aware of who is around you. Persons distracted by phone calls or music tend to be heavily targeted by thieves and pickpockets.

Create added distance between yourself and persons who are intoxicated or acting in an unusual manner, especially when they are in groups. Intoxicated persons can be unpredictable and sometimes violent. Avoid walking alone after consuming alcohol.

Visitors should be mindful that security at nightclubs could respond more forcefully than at similar venues in the U.S. Travelers should avoid altercations with bar personnel or other patrons. Travelers should be aware that casinos and other gaming establishments are government-regulated, but many are likely affiliated with, or have attracted the interest of, organized crime. Customers at these establishments are advised not to leave their drinks unattended or to accept drinks from anyone other than their server or bartender.

Do not try to stop and confront someone who is trying to get your attention or verbally accost you. If presented with a potential aggressor, try to leave the situation and only use self-defense techniques as a last resort. Aggressors can be armed or working with others who might be trying to distract you. Watch for unusual body language or facial cues that indicate hostile intent.

Be extra cautious when crossing streets or operating a vehicle at night due to the possibility

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that other drivers may be impaired.

The increased useage of ATM and credit card transactions may provide increased opportunities for those involved in fraudulent activity. Use reputable, international banking institutions that employ higher standards of security, where possible. ATMs inside a bank may be more secure than those located outside (e.g. on a sidewalk). Inspect the door-access device prior to opening lobby doors for evidence of tampering. Use a different card to open lobby doors than you use inside. Most door-access devices will open with many different cards that have magnetic strips (e.g. gift cards), not just cards associated with one particular bank. Inspect the machine for items that may have been installed over or around the PIN pad. Customers should be looking for an attachment on the ATM that contains a small hole pointed in the direction of the PIN pad. This may be used to house a camera that can record your PIN. Lightly pull the card slot. Look for signs of tampering, including a loose or detached card slot or the presence of double-sided tape (which is used by many “skimmers” to ensure quick and easy removal). Cover the keypad with you other hand while typing your PIN. Be alert for suspicious individuals loitering in the area.

Visitors should change money only at banks, legitimate businesses, or ATMs. Visitors requiring ATM services should attempt to use machines at more secure or heavily traveled and monitored locations, which include commercial banks, large hotels, and the airport. Personal bank account activity should be regularly and closely monitored.

Shred ATM receipts, credit statements, credit cards, or bank statements when possible, to reduce opportunities for identity fraud. Do not give your credit card number over the telephone unless you initiated the call. When providing a credit card at point of sale, try to ensure that it remains in line of sight throughout the transaction. Reconcile your bank account regularly, and notify your bank of discrepancies immediately. Report unauthorized financial transactions to your bank, credit card company, and the police as soon as you detect them. Keep a list of

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telephone numbers to call to report the loss or theft of your wallet or credit cards. Report international travel dates to your bank.

Maintain a low personal profile by not doing anything that draws attention to yourself. Ensure your colleagues and family are aware of your daily plans and how to reach you. Vary your times and routes to and from work. Schedules that are the most predictable leave you the most vulnerable. Be unpredictable when possible in both your work and social schedules. Always be aware of your surroundings. Report all suspicious activity. Never give out your personal information such as family member and household staff names, addresses, and telephone numbers in an open setting. Ensure all of your family members are briefed on security measures.

Always use the security equipment (e.g., deadbolts, chain locks, peepholes, alarms) that is provided at residences. Turn door locks fully to ensure that deadbolts are engaged. Do not leave door keys in locks or in a location that may be visible from outside the residence. Valuables and important documents should be kept in a safe.

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