



Mexico 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Mexico City

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Surveillance; Stolen items; Theft; Kidnapping; Financial Security; Fraud; Burglary; Narcoterrorism; Drug Trafficking; Extortion; Cargo Security; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Volcanoes; Hurricanes; Employee Health Safety; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement

Western Hemisphere > Mexico; Western Hemisphere > Mexico > Mexico City

3/3/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Critical

The Department of State divides its roles and responsibilities in Mexico among 10 consular districts across Mexico. This Crime and Safety Report focuses on the Embassy's district, which is composed of the Mexican Federal District that is Mexico City, the southern tip of Tamaulipas State and the following 13 states: Chiapas, Estado de Mexico, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Michoacán, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Tabasco, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz. For information regarding the security environment in other areas of Mexico, please reference the OSAC Crime and Safety Reports for Tijuana, Nogales, Hermosillo, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, Monterrey, Guadalajara, or Merida.

Crime Threats

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The general crime rate in Mexico City is above the U.S. national average. Crime varies widely. Armed robberies, kidnappings, car thefts, credit card fraud, and various forms of residential/street crime are daily concerns. The low rate of criminal convictions contributes to the high crime rate. Although there is no pattern of criminals specifically targeting foreign or American businesses or personnel, criminals will target anyone perceived as sufficiently lucrative and vulnerable. Criminals select victims based on an appearance of prosperity, vulnerability, or a lack of awareness. Thefts of the vehicle's operating computer and sound systems are common crimes. Although Mexico employs strict gun-control laws, criminals are usually armed with handguns (or knives).

Millions of Americans safely live, work, and take vacations in Mexico every year; however, organized criminal groups continue to produce significant levels of violence throughout parts of the country. Organized crime is common in many areas. The northern half Mexico was considered a higher threat area, primarily due to organized criminal conflicts and competition for drug trafficking routes to the U.S. Recent statistics, however, show that violence is on the rise in central and southern states, particularly in Guerrero, Michoacán, and the state of Mexico. One common practice is for gangs to charge 'protection fees' or add their own tax to products and services with the threat of violence for those who fail to pay. Foreign and American companies have been extorted, and some have been attacked for not responding to the criminals' demands. Some criminal groups will mandate that individuals or even whole communities work for them as lookouts or couriers. Still others will threaten municipal and state level administrators into accepting corrupt practices. Beheadings, lynching, torture, and other gruesome displays of violence as well as high numbers of forced disappearances have become routine occurrences in various parts of the country, to include in the Mexico City metropolitan area. Numerous journalists and bloggers have been killed over the past few years for reporting on such incidents.

Mexico is experiencing a combination of conditions that collectively degrade the security environment in certain areas. The government has had recent successes in capturing some of its most wanted criminals; consequently, organized criminal groups are becoming much less

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organized and disciplined. Various groups have splintered into smaller gangs, which have branched out into different illegal business activities, and the associated violence is spreading across Mexico.

There are numerous reports in which U.S. citizens have had their card numbers “skimmed” and the money in their debit accounts stolen or their credit cards fraudulently charged (“Skimming” is the theft of credit card information by an employee of a legitimate merchant or bank, manually copying down numbers or using a magnetic stripe reader or using a camera and skimmer installed in an ATM). In addition to skimming, the risk of physical theft of credit or debit cards also exists.

Cargo theft remains a key area of concern for U.S. and foreign companies. FreightWatch International, a well-known company offering logistics security services, ranks the level of cargo crime in Mexico as “severe,” its worst ranking, primarily because the supply chain continues to face threats from cargo criminals, corrupt law enforcement personnel, and, to a smaller extent, organized crime. Annual cargo theft incidents have been estimated at more than 5,000 per year, according to Mexico’s Secretariat of Government, and FreightWatch has determined that cargo theft increased by about 14 percent between 2012 and 2013. The majority of stolen goods ends up being resold in local markets, primarily in Mexico City, Monterrey, and Guadalajara. Some U.S. company representatives complained in early August 2014 about the burden of cargo theft on manufacturing companies exporting to the U.S., saying they do not receive assistance from the government or law enforcement. Instead, companies are using the OSAC Country Council, the American Chamber of Commerce, and informal mechanisms to share information. This crime, while worrisome, is not preventing companies from operating in Mexico. While hijackings have declined in terms of the overall percentage of cargo theft incidents, railway attacks are becoming more commonplace. In addition, sources have seen an increase in the theft of plastic moved via train that is attributed to the availability of molds for toy figurines that sell quickly in local markets.

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Other Areas of Concern

According to the Procuraduria General de Justicia del Distrito Federal and the Secretaria Publica del Distrito Federal, the following city boroughs routinely have the highest number of crimes reported in 2015: Iztapalapa, Cuauhtémoc, Gustavo A. Madero, Benito Juárez, Coyoacan, and Tlalpan.

The Embassy strictly controls U.S. government employees' travel to several parts of the Embassy's district, including the states of Guerrero and Michoacán.

Travel for U.S. government employees is closely scrutinized due to the ebb and flow of violence associated with organized criminal groups. For a state-by-state assessment, peruse the latest U.S. Department of State Travel Warning for Mexico at: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html>

The government has deployed federal police and military personnel as part of its effort to combat organized criminal groups. U.S. citizens traveling on Mexican roads and highways may encounter government checkpoints, which are often staffed by military personnel. You are advised to cooperate with personnel at government checkpoints and mobile military patrols. Criminal organizations have been known to erect their own unauthorized checkpoints and have killed or abducted motorists who fail to stop at them. Likewise, self-defense groups have established checkpoints in their communities and have shot and wounded travelers who fail to stop. When approaching a checkpoint, regardless of whether it is official or non-official,

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cooperate and avoid any actions that may be perceived to be suspicious or aggressive.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Public Transportation Conditions

The Embassy does not recommend using "libre" taxis, as they are poorly regulated and often criminally-linked enterprises that pick up fares on the street after being hailed by customers. One simple way to lessen one's chances of becoming a victim of street crime in Mexico City is to avoid the use of "libre" taxi cabs. "Sitio" or radio dispatched taxis are far safer, more reliable, and are worth the added expense. These types of taxis cannot be hailed off the street and must be ordered by phone or met at a designated taxi stand. To request a taxi, call, or have the merchant you are visiting call, a radio dispatched "sitio" taxi. Twenty-four hour radio taxi service is available at 5516-6020 and 3626-9800 to 30. "Sitio" taxis in Mexico City are most often metered and registered by the government. "Sitio" taxis from Benito Juarez International Airport are paid in advance in the terminal (at the "sitio" stands) and are well regulated. In addition, the Embassy permits car services that can be requested online via phone/tablet applications, which allow consumers to verify the driver and vehicle number.

Visitors should travel by intercity bus only during daylight hours and only by first-class conveyance whenever possible. Although there have been several reports of bus hijackings and robberies on toll roads, buses on toll roads have experienced a lower rate of incidents than buses (second- and third-class) that travel on less secure, "libre" highways. Bus travel through Tamaulipas is especially hazardous. Public and private passenger buses traveling through Tamaulipas are sometimes targeted by organized criminal groups that take all

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passengers hostage and demand ransom payments.

In Mexico City, municipal buses and the Metro (subway) are generally safe to use. Non-municipal buses ("micros") are not well regulated and are not recommended. City buses and the Metro may be crowded, and passengers should be on the alert for pickpockets and other thieves, especially on the most crowded, busiest routes during rush hour. Passengers should take care to protect their belongings and valuables. There have been occasional reports of significant security incidents (apart from theft) on tourist buses in and around Mexico City and to nearby tourist destinations. Buses from Mexico City to the pyramids of Teotihuacan have been stopped and all passengers robbed. The Country Specific Information for Mexico (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_970.html#traffic_safety) has a comprehensive section on traffic/roads.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

There are plenty of air connections within Mexico, and the Embassy recommends that its employees fly, rather than drive, to many destinations.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

The government remained vigilant against domestic and foreign terrorist threats in 2015. The U.S. Embassy/Consulates are focused on Mexico as a potential transit country for foreign terrorist groups to conduct operations against the U.S. There are no known foreign terrorist organizations operating in Mexico, and there is no evidence that any terrorist group has targeted U.S. citizens in Mexico. Mexico does not provide a safe haven to terrorists or terrorist groups. The government passed amendments to its Federal Penal Code that strengthened the country's legal framework to address acts of terrorism, including terrorist financing. Authorities cooperate well with relevant U.S. government agencies on persons of interest. Criminal organizations have used terror-like tactics (car bombs and grenades) to attack each other and security forces. They also commit gruesome acts of violence designed to terrorize; however, the effects of these acts seem directed largely at rival gangs.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

American interests in Mexico City are generally not targets of political violence. Peaceful demonstrations of all sizes gather regularly at the Monument to Independency (the Angel) near the U.S. Embassy, to protest government policies, labor, and social issues, and, occasionally, U.S. policies. These protests often affect traffic during peak commute hours on and near Paseo de La Reforma, the city's primary avenue passing in front of the U.S. Embassy.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

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Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Most demonstrations are peaceful; however, even demonstrations intended to be peaceful may turn confrontational and escalate into violence. Demonstrators frequently block city streets, major highways, or take control of government toll roads on major highways and may demand unofficial tolls from travelers. Recently, groups associated with teachers' unions and those protesting recent alleged human rights violations in the state of Guerrero have used checkpoints as a way of raising money for their causes. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid areas of demonstrations and to exercise caution if in the vicinity of any protests.

The Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners; such actions may result in detention and/or deportation. Travelers should avoid political demonstrations and other activities that might be deemed political.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

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In 1985, Mexico City was hit by one of the most devastating earthquakes in the history of the Americas. The earthquake measured 8.1. According to official government statistics, at least 9,000 people were killed, 30,000 were injured, and 100,000 were left homeless. Over 400 buildings were destroyed, and over 3,000 were seriously damaged. The government expects that another significant earthquake could occur at any time. Although there have been substantial improvements in building regulations and response planning, there is no guarantee that there would not be significant damage, injuries, and loss of life again. On April 18, 2014, central Mexico was rocked by a 7.5 earthquake. Then, on May 8, 2014, a 6.4 earthquake was registered in Guerrero (171 miles southwest of Mexico City). Earthquakes within the Embassy's consular districts are routine, especially in the Pacific coast states.

Volcanoes, both active and dormant, are scattered throughout central Mexico. One of the country's largest volcanoes, Popocatepetl, is only 43 miles southeast of Mexico City and has had several low-level eruptions in the past several of years. Travelers should be aware that the government prevents access to the mountain and has closed it to climbers and hikers. According to public safety officials, travelers to the area should have N-95 filter masks available in case ash falls on them. Clouds of ash associated with volcanic activity can limit air travel and make evacuation by air difficult. On December 17, 2014, there were three explosions from the Popocatepetl volcano that resulted in the volcano alert system being raised to "Yellow Phase 2." This did not require evacuations, but the Puebla International Airport closed that morning as a precautionary measure. A similar yellow alert was raised when the Colima volcano in Jalisco had some eruptions on January 5, 2015. Ash reached seven municipalities in Jalisco, but there were no evacuations.

From June to November, hurricanes may affect the Pacific and Gulf coasts of the Embassy's consular district. The coastal states tend to receive the brunt of these storms; however, hurricanes and tropical storms have caused flooding and disruption of utility services

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throughout the district. Travelers are advised to keep abreast of developing weather conditions during the hurricane season and to avoid the paths of storms when possible.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

On August 6, 2014, 10 million gallons of mining process waste escaped from a containment basin of the Buenavista del Cobre mine operated by Grupo Mexico in northwest Mexico. The unintentional release of the mine waste (tailings) contaminated two Sonoran rivers and left 20,000 residents without drinking water. After the spill, the company took actions to neutralize the acidity of the water, but the long-term impacts to the sediment and the ground water from the heavy metals and other contaminants remain unclear.

A week later, an unrelated gold mine in Durango also reported an accidental release of cyanide into a stream; this smaller release caused an environmental emergency but seems to be under control.

On January 31, 2013, there was a large explosion at the headquarters of Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) in Mexico City that left at least 37 dead and 126 wounded. In the official investigation report released by the government, the cause of the explosion was a build-up of dangerous gases ignited by an electrical spark.

For 2013, the Ministry of Labor (Secretaria del Trabajo y Prevision Social, STPS) and Institute of Social Security (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, IMSS) reported a total of 495,759

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(closed) cases of industrial and transportation accidents, including work illnesses. The sectors with the highest reported rate of incidents were transportation and construction.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Mexico was listed on the Watch List in the 2015 Special 301 Report, which is the result of an annual review of the state of intellectual property rights protection and enforcement among U.S. trading partners around the world prepared annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) under Section 301 as amended of the Trade Act of 1974. The report noted inadequate IPR enforcement and the wide availability of pirated and counterfeit goods mostly via physical and virtual markets. Criminal organizations are significantly involved in the counterfeit and pirated goods trade. Criminal enforcement efforts of intellectual property rights (IPR) suffers from weak coordination among federal, state, and municipal officials, limited resources for prosecutions, lack of long-term sustained investigations to target high-level suppliers of counterfeit and pirated goods, and the need for deterrent level penalties. The U.S. continues to encourage Mexico to provide its customs officials with ex-officio authority, allow the Attorney General Offices the authority to prosecute transshipments of alleged counterfeit and pirated goods, and to enact legislation to strengthen its copyright regime, including by implementing the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Internet Treaties by providing stronger protection against the unauthorized recording of motion pictures in theaters. The U.S. continues to work with Mexico to resolve IPR concerns through bilateral, regional, and other means of engagement.

Economic espionage activity is covered under misappropriation of trade secrets law in Mexico. The three sources of trade secrets law are the Industrial Property Law, Federal Criminal Code, and NAFTA, all of which provide fines and criminal penalties for misappropriation of trade secrets. There have been extremely limited prosecutions by

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authorities of trade secret misappropriation due to onerous legal requirements and evidentiary issues tied to proving theft of digital files.

Kidnapping Threat

The number of kidnappings reported throughout Mexico is of particular concern. The overall numbers of kidnapping incidents are difficult to determine because most of the cases are not reported to authorities. The majority of cases reported to the U.S. Embassy have been kidnapping for ransom (KFR) cases. In some KFR cases, a ransom is paid, and the victim set free, but in other cases the victims are killed despite having paid a ransom. The general practice on the part of the victim's family or friends is not to notify authorities, as the popular belief is that the police may be involved in the crime or are unable to resolve the situation. Affluent residents in Mexico City often have bodyguards and armored vehicles for their families to prevent them from being kidnapped.

While kidnappings can occur anywhere, according to government statistics, during 2015 only 659 kidnapping cases were reported formally within Embassy Mexico City's Consular District. States with the highest number of kidnappings in 2015 were Estado de México, Veracruz, Guerrero, and Tabasco. Police (or former law enforcement officials) have been implicated in many of these incidents.

There were 63 reported kidnapping events with a U.S. nexus in Embassy Mexico City's Consular District and over 200 incidents for all of Mexico. These figures include U.S. citizens, Legal Permanent Residents, and cases in which the primary victim was neither a U.S. citizen nor a LPR but in which an extortion call was made to U.S. citizen family members in the U.S.

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The number of reported express kidnappings is low. Express kidnappings are based on the 24-hour withdrawal limit placed on ATM cards industry-wide. A common modus operandi for express kidnappings in Mexico City is: passengers using “libre” taxis are often robbed by two or three armed individuals who enter the taxi a few minutes into the trip, having been called or signaled by the driver. The passenger is held for a number of hours and released after a small ransom is paid or is shuttled to a series of ATMs and forced to withdraw funds. Express kidnapping victims are held for 24-48 hours to maximize withdrawal amounts. The term "express kidnapping" is also applied to the kidnapping of random victims held for brief periods where only small ransom amounts are demanded. A typical scenario may last for several hours and may be settled for the peso-equivalent of a few hundred or thousand dollars. Few official U.S. government employees have suffered this type of crime, but many Mexican employees of the Embassy either have been victimized themselves or personally know a victim.

There appears to be an up-tick in “virtual kidnappings.” These extortion telephone calls vary in style; however, the methodology is often the same: callers say that they have kidnapped a loved one and often include a crying/pleading voice immediately after the call is answered and before the “kidnapper” gets on the phone. In this manner, they hope to confuse the victim and get them to give away important information. For example, if the crying voice sounds like the target’s child and the target calls out that child’s name, the caller then knows the name of the child, who could be a kidnap victim, and they will use this knowledge against the target. The voice of the “victim” will usually be crying and/or hysterical, making it difficult to identify and increase the likelihood that the victim will believe it is their loved one. Criminals will try to use fear and timing against victims. For example, they plan their calls to coincide with times when it will be difficult to contact the victim immediately (e.g. when children are on their way to/from school). Or, the callers will obtain two cell phones of two family members. They will call both victims at the same time and claim to have kidnapped the other relative. They will use fear and the threat of violence to keep both victims on the line while they urge them to pay a ransom. Once the kidnappers are satisfied they have obtained as much money as they can,

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they end the call, leaving both family members poorer and confused. They may demand that the ransom be delivered in person, which may then turn into a real kidnapping, or that the money be sent electronically. Other variations on this scam use callers who claim to be lawyers or police looking to help get one of the target's family members out a bad situation. They pressure the target to pay them to waive charges or to bribe alleged corrupt officials in order to free their loved one and avoid a long and expensive judicial process.

Virtual kidnapping/extortion calls are made to both Mexican and external numbers and often use information obtained from social networking websites. Another variation that travelers staying at hotels as guests have reported is an extortion-by-deception scheme wherein a victim is contacted by phone and convinced to isolate themselves from family and friends until a ransom is paid. The victim is coerced (by threat of violence) to remain isolated and to provide phone numbers for the victim's family or loved ones. The victim's family is contacted, and a ransom for the "kidnapped" person is extracted. Oftentimes, the callers will make statements to suggest surveillance. This is very vague but implies they have been watching the victim's family and using fear and everyday routines against them to reinforce the threat of the kidnapping.

Police Response

In its efforts to heighten security, the government has deployed security forces to various parts of the country and has created a new military unit known as the National Gendarmerie to augment security in certain areas of Mexico.

Tourists should be wary of persons representing themselves as police officers or other

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officials. When in doubt, ask for identification.

Be aware that offering a bribe to a public official to avoid a ticket or other penalty is a crime. U.S. citizens are advised to cooperate with the police if stopped or questioned.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In some instances, U.S. citizens have become victims of harassment, mistreatment, or extortion by law enforcement and other officials. Authorities have cooperated in investigating some cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Americans are advised to note this information if they ever have a problem with police or other officials.

Crime Victim Assistance

Americans may contact the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City for assistance in dealing with the police. If involved in a traffic accident or victimized by crime, one may be required to accompany the investigating officer to the local police station to file a complaint or respond to questions. Should a police report be required for an insurance claim, a nominal fee will be charged.

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Host Nation Police Emergency: 066 (similar to 911 in the U.S.)

Fire Department: 068

Ambulance: 065 (Red Cross)

Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad Publica y Procuracion de Justicia del Distrito Federal (in Mexico City, takes complaints from those afraid to go to the police): 5533-5533

Police/Security Agencies

Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR) - Office of the Mexican Attorney General is responsible for investigating and prosecuting federal crimes.

Secretary of Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación, SEGOB) - Oversees federal police forces. The federal police are approximately 38,000 strong and are present in all states. They oversee the Mexican Immigration Service (INAMI), whose officers have the right to detain suspected undocumented aliens and, under certain conditions, may deport them without formal deportation proceedings.

Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit (Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público) - Customs officers (Aduana) are deployed at borders and at international airports to interdict contraband entering Mexico.

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The Bank of Mexico (Banco de México) - Operates its own security division, which is charged with enforcing banking and monetary laws, including cases of counterfeiting, fraud, and money laundering.

Procuraduria General de Justicia (PGJ) – The local Mexican Attorney in each state/city is in charge of investigating and prosecuting state and local crimes.

State Police - Each of the country's 31 states and the Federal District maintain both preventive and judicial police. State police are under the direction of the state's governor.

Municipal Police - Each state contains numerous municipalities, and within each municipality exists a municipal police force.

Military Forces - Over the last seven years, the army and navy have been heavily involved in anti-crime initiatives, as they combat organized criminal groups.

Medical Emergencies

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of States Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, "Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad," available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs at

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<http://www.travel.state.gov>.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

ABC HOSPITAL (OBSERVATORIO)

Sur 136 No. 116 Col. Las Américas,

01120 México, D.F.

Tel: 5230-8000

ABC HOSPITAL (SANTA FE)

Av. Carlos Graef Fernández 154 (enter from Av. Vasco de Quiroga), Col. Tlaxala Santa Fe, Cuajimalpa, 05300 México, D.F.

Tel: 1103-1600; Emergencies: 1103-1666 (Spanish)

HOSPITAL ESPANOL

EJÉRCITO NACIONAL #613, G No. 613, Granada, Col. Polanco, (Miguel Hidalgo)

11520 México, D.F.

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Tel: 5255-9600

HOSPITAL ANGELES DE LAS LOMAS

AV, VIALIDAD DE LA BARRANCA No. 22, Col. Valle de Las Palmas

52763 Huixquilucan, Edo. De México

Tel: 5246-5000, Emergencies: 5246-5092, 5246-5093

Available Air Ambulance Services

The RSO does not endorse any specific private insurance or air ambulance company. The following list is for informational purposes only:

Advanced Air Ambulance 800-633-3590 or 305-232-7700

Air Ambulance Professionals 800-752-4195 or 954-730-9300

Recommended Insurance Posture

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For international treatment and medical insurance, see:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1470.html

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For vaccine and health guidance, please visit the CDC International Traveler's hotline - 24 hour info available at 800-232-4636 or
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/mexico>.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Department of State supports an active OSAC Country Council, with a membership of 90 companies. For information on OSAC and future OSAC Mexico City events, contact Ms. Janet Salgado at 5080-2000, ext. 4918. For more information, contact the Regional Security Office at U.S. Embassy Mexico City at 5080-2400. Visit the Council online at:
<http://mexicocity.osac.gov/http://mexicocity.osac.gov> or <http://www.osac.gov>. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

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U.S. Embassy Mexico City

Paseo de la Reforma, 305

Col. Cuauhtémoc

Mexico, D.F. 06500

Business hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM-5:30 PM

Embassy Contact Numbers

Mexico country code: 52

Mexico City area code: 55

Telephone - 5080-2000 (24/7 switchboard operator)

Regional Security Office: 5080-2000 ext. 2400

Medical Unit: 5080-2400 ext. 2800

Consular Affairs: 5080-2000, ext. 4440 (after hours request duty officer via switchboard)

Political Section: 5080-2000 ext. 2052

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Economic Section: 5080-2000 ext. 2999 or 2699

Website: <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/>

Nearby Posts

Consulate Ciudad Juarez: <http://ciudadjuarez.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guadalajara: <http://guadalajara.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Hermosillo: <http://hermosillo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Matamoros: <http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Merida: <http://merida.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Monterrey: <http://monterrey.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Nogales: <http://nogales.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Nuevo Laredo: <http://nuevolaredo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Tijuana: <http://tijuana.usconsulate.gov/>

Embassy Guidance

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It is prudent to leave a detailed itinerary, including local contact information and expected date of return, with a friend or family member, and to sign up for the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Country-specific information regarding Mexico is provided at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_970.html#medical.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

To reduce the likelihood of receiving a virtual kidnapping call, answer the phone with "hello" and make the other person ask for you by name; know the details of your family's travel and location (where they are supposed to be, who they are supposed to be with, etc.) and contact information (land-line and cell phone numbers); never provide personal information to someone who calls or approaches you; and do not post personal information on social networking sites.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors should be familiar with the Department's latest Travel Warning for Mexico, use strong personal security practices, and recognize that crime can occur in any place and at any time. Maintain a low profile: Do not advertise the fact that you are American. Dress casually, keep valuables out of sight, and do not draw attention to yourself with your actions. Vary your routine: Be unpredictable in your movements, vary your routes from home to the office and your departure/arrival times. Be alert to possible surveillance: Note any individual who

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appears out of place along your routes to regularly scheduled activities. Be alert to your surroundings: Minimize valuables and do not carry large sums of money while in crowded, urban areas. Be aware of popular scams and robbery tactics used to distract your attention.

Exercise caution when utilizing credit/debit cards in ATMs or dubious locales. To prevent theft, the Embassy recommends that travelers keep close track of their personal belongings and that they only carry what they need. Make copies of what you carry, so if victimized the credit cards can be cancelled quickly. If travelers choose to use credit cards, they should regularly check their account status to ensure its integrity. Try to use ATMs in bank branches during business hours.

Wearing expensive jewelry, watches, and displays of large amounts of cash draw unwanted attention. Jewelry, especially expensive watches, and cellular phones can be sold easily in vast illegal markets. Avoid wearing jewelry, especially watches that are or appear to be expensive. Never leave shopping bags or merchandise unattended. When grocery shopping always carry your purse with you. Never leave it in your cart, even for a few seconds.

When hiring domestic help, vet them by identifying references. Ensure that they are trained not to volunteer information to strangers or to allow access of workers without prior authorization.

Mitigating the cargo theft risk is possible by taking precautions, such as avoiding highways known to be dangerous for cargo, using high-tech locks, and avoiding driving at night, according to FreightWatch.

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