



New Zealand 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Fraud; Separatist violence; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Tsunamis; Volcanoes; Maritime; Oil & Energy; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Surveillance; Drug Trafficking

East Asia & Pacific > New Zealand; East Asia & Pacific > New Zealand > Wellington

4/12/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

In general, crime is less prevalent in New Zealand than in major cities in the U.S. A majority of the population lives in the larger urban areas of Wellington, Auckland, and Christchurch, all of which continue to lead the country in criminal activity and associated arrests. Although complete statistics for 2015 are not yet available, mid-year indicators show a 5.4 percent decline in violent and petty crimes nationwide in comparison to 2014.

The majority of crimes are crimes of opportunity. Street crimes (theft from vehicles) are routine occurrences in major urban areas, and foreign tourists are frequently the victims. Arrests for weapons-related offences continued to show a slight decline; however, the use of weapons in crimes remains infrequent. Homicides and other violent crimes declined as well, although there was a 10 percent increase in fraud and deception-related offences over 2014. It was unclear whether this increase was due to an actual spike in criminal activity or whether law enforcement outreach efforts have encouraged more victims to file reports.

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Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

New Zealand is serviced by over 60,000 kilometers of paved roads, including motorways that connect the major metropolitan areas. The roads leading to/from New Zealand's major cities are comparable to Western standards in terms of width; however, roads in rural areas are slightly narrower than those in the U.S. The major roadways linking cities and towns are two-lane roadways; this, coupled with the extreme topographic aspects of the country, can make overtaking of vehicles dangerous.

Most traffic laws are comparable to Western standards. There are numerous roundabouts (traffic circles) throughout the country that can be confusing and dangerous for those who are unfamiliar with giving way to the right. Traffic flows similar to the system used in the UK. These conditions, combined with routine extreme weather, make it essential for newcomers to familiarize themselves with local laws and procedures before driving a motor vehicle.

Do not leave valuables inside your vehicle. If you must leave items in the car, keep them locked in the trunk. Never pick up hitchhikers.

Terrorism Threat

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Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

New Zealand continues to be a partner to the U.S. in the fight against terrorism. In late 2014, New Zealand deployed members of the New Zealand Defense Forces (NZDF) to Iraq on a training mission in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. New Zealand has not been the specific target of an international or transnational terrorist attack in recent years, but terrorists could view it as a potential target. The government enacted legislation in 2002 that increased New Zealand's capability to pre-empt and respond to terrorist attacks, including the appointment of an assistant commissioner within the police to focus efforts, a full-time Special Tactics Group for operational response, a full-time Specialist Search Group and National Bomb Data Centre Manager, a Strategic Intelligence Unit and liaison positions at New Zealand's diplomatic missions.

New Zealand, in line with its commitments under international law, adopts procedures to implement UN resolutions against terrorism, including taking steps to prevent terrorist financing, recruiting, or other forms of support. New Zealand applies these measures against specific entities listed by the UN Security Council as being associated with the Taliban or al-Qa'ida network. All terrorist entities listed by the UN are automatically listed by New Zealand. These entities remain terrorist entities in New Zealand for as long as they remain listed by the UN.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

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Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

There are occasional protests, including at the U.S. Embassy in Wellington and U.S. Consulate General in Auckland. They usually highlight anti-globalization themes, opposition to the war in Afghanistan, domestic political issues, and indigenous (Maori) rights. These protests are generally peaceful. There were significant protests in Auckland against the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement in 2015 that drew several thousand protestors. Both events were generally orderly, with few arrests reported. Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

There is one indigenous Maori separatist group that has called for the formation of a separate nation within New Zealand for the Maori people. This group is not seen as a threat.

Police have also identified a small number of supporters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIL) in New Zealand but have not judged any of these individuals to comprise active threats.

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Post-Specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

The possibility of natural disasters is one of the greatest threats faced by people living and working in New Zealand. It is critical for businesses to have a plan for emergencies, addressing personnel accountability, personnel sustainability, communication, and continuity of operations. The government, through its Ministry of Civil Defence, promotes emergency preparedness within New Zealand, urging people to take personal responsibility for their safety and security in the event of a natural disaster. New Zealand has Civil Defence (www.civildefence.govt.nz) centers throughout the country that serve as command posts and assistance centers during a natural disaster.

In September 2010, a major earthquake measuring 7.1 struck the Canterbury region of the South Island, centered in Christchurch, causing substantial structural damage but no deaths.

On February 22, 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Christchurch, causing major damage to buildings and infrastructure, especially within the Central Business District (CBD) and resulting in the deaths of 181 people and serious injury to at least 164 people. The 2011 earthquake that devastated Christchurch underscores the potential risk of earthquakes, and has caused persistent damage to major infrastructure in New Zealand's third largest city.

A 6.5 earthquake struck in July 2013 and a 6.6 earthquake in August, both in the Wellington region. The earthquakes originated near Seddon and the Cook Strait, and several

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aftershocks were felt for days after (some with 5-6 magnitudes). Damage throughout the city caused closures of some buildings and parking lots.

In January 2014, Wellington experienced a 6.2 magnitude earthquake; however, little/no damage was reported there. The earthquake originated near Eketahuna, and damage to roads, buildings, and houses was reported in/around Masterton.

As an island nation, New Zealand's port cities are susceptible to tsunamis. Although no recent tsunamis have caused significant damage, the country does experience occasional watches/warnings related to seismic activity in the Pacific region. The Ministry of Civil Defence announces when advisories have been issued through local and national media.

New Zealand's North Island contains a number of active and dormant volcanoes. Although the probability of an eruption affecting a large area is relatively low in any given year, New Zealand's 12 active volcanic areas are important considerations when developing emergency preparedness plans.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

In November 2010, an underground coal mine exploded near Greymouth on the South Island. Some 29 miners were killed. International assistance (equipment, expertise, materials from the U.S., Australia, and others) was sought and delivered. The environment in the mine was never sufficiently stabilized to allow recovery of the bodies.

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Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The government has identified intellectual property theft as a serious crime and has proposed allocating additional resources toward investigating and indicting copyright thieves. Government agencies, acting on information provided by the New Zealand Screen Association (NZSA) and members of the public, continue to identify and raid illegal distributors and manufacturing labs across New Zealand. In 2006, a New Zealand movie thief received a jail sentence for the first time. NZSA investigators work closely with law enforcement authorities to ensure that copyright is protected. NZSA also works with the Motion Picture Association and other industry anti-piracy associations (music, computer software, computer games industries) in the effort to stamp out piracy and other forms of copyright theft.

Privacy Concerns

There are a few organizations that have expressed concern about the government's abilities to collect information as covered in the Privacy Act, which was sworn into law in 1993, since there have been several revisions to cover the changing technology fronts. The Privacy Act controls how "agencies" collect, use, disclose, store, and give access to "personal information." Almost every person or organization that holds personal information is considered to be an "agency." As a result, the Privacy Act covers government departments, companies of all sizes, religious groups, schools, and clubs. The privacy Codes of Practice do the same, but they apply to specific areas (health, telecommunications, credit reporting).

At the heart of the Privacy Act are 12 privacy principles, covering:

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Collection of personal information (principles 1-4)

Storage and security of personal information (principle 5)

Requests for access to and correction of personal information (principles 6 and 7, parts 4 and 5)

Accuracy of personal information (principle 8)

Retention of personal information (principle 9)

Use and disclosure of personal information (principles 10 and 11)

Using unique identifiers (principle 12)

There are also four principles covering public registers, which reflect internationally accepted standards for the safe handling of personal information.

Drug-related Crimes

The police report that organized crime groups continue to control the illegal drug trade in New Zealand. Methamphetamine continues to be the most prevalent street drug used, with marijuana a close second. A 2004 change in legislation restricted access to pseudoephedrine, the most common chemical needed for the manufacture of methamphetamine. As a result, illegal importation of pseudoephedrine has steadily increased since.

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Overall arrests for drug-related crimes have remained consistent, and efforts to eliminate cannabis crops and the manufacturing/supply of methamphetamine have proved somewhat successful. In 2009, New Zealand passed several legislative initiatives to tackle the growing organized crime strongholds of illegal drugs, extortion, and human trafficking. These initiatives have provided the police and law agencies with greater authorities to combat these crimes.

Police Response

The police provide services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They operate from more than 370 community-based police stations and have a staff of 12,000 personnel who respond to more than 715,000 emergency calls each year. The police operate by land, sea, and air. The police are trained to a Western standard and are actively involved in crime prevention and response.

Compared to their U.S. counterparts, the police have limited resources and personnel. This constrains their response times to calls and the types of response dispatched. That said, the police respond to major incidents with the appropriate personnel necessary to deal with the situation.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

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Police harassment, misconduct, and corruption are not significant issues. People detained by police have rights enshrined under the New Zealand Bill of Rights, including the right to legal representation; which includes an initial free consultation.

Crime Victim Assistance

To contact the police in an emergency anywhere in New Zealand, dial 111 from any phone.

Police/Security Agencies

The New Zealand Police is the lead agency responsible for reducing crime and enhancing community safety. They have specialized units to deal with armed offenders and hostage situations.

The police commissioner is responsible for the operational response to threats to national security, including terrorism, and has a key role through the Officials Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC). ODESC is made up of many different government and non-government agencies which work together to manage New Zealand's wider counter-terrorism efforts.

The Financial Crime Group, established in December 2009, undertook significant work to develop and implement the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act 2009 that enables the proceeds of crime to be forfeited to the Crown based on the civil

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standard of proof rather than requiring a criminal conviction.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, dialing 111 will provide a connection to a dispatch center for police, fire, and ambulance services.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

There are numerous hospitals and clinics throughout New Zealand that offer adequate health care that meets Western standards.

Available Air Ambulance Services

The air ambulance service is Life Flight and can be contacted at +64-4-387-9591.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/new-zealand?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

The OSAC Country Council is coordinated by RSO Timothy Dalton. The Embassy is actively seeking to re-launch OSAC in New Zealand and establish a regular meeting schedule. To reach OSAC's East Asia Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Wellington

29 Fitzherbert Terrace

Thorndon 6011

Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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Embassy Contact Numbers

Regional Security Officer (Wellington): +64-4-462-6110

Post 1: +64-4-462-6035

Embassy Operator: +64-4-462-6000

Consular Affairs (Auckland): +64-9-303-2724

Duty Officer: +64-9-303-2724, ext. 2900

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

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Information on scams that may be operated in New Zealand can be found at:
<http://www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz/scams/scam-types>

Situational Awareness Best Practices

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Visitors should always be aware of their surroundings. Avoid short cuts, narrow alleys, or poorly illuminated streets. Travel in groups at night. Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Be wary of strangers who approach you and offer to be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices. If you are confronted, give up your valuables; no personal possession is worth your life. Keep the door to your hotel room locked. Do not flash large amounts of money. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.

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