



Embassy of the United States of America Belmopan

TRAVEL ALERT - HURRICANE SEASON 2011

1. The Department of State alerts U.S. citizens to the Hurricane Season in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane season in the Atlantic begins June 1 and ends November 30. The Eastern Pacific hurricane season began May 15 and ends November 30. This Travel Alert expires on December 1, 2011.
2. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center expects to see an above-normal hurricane season this year in the Atlantic. NOAA predicts a 70 percent chance of 12 to 18 named storms, which includes 6 to 10 hurricanes, 3 to 6 of which are expected to become major hurricanes. Climate conditions point to a below normal hurricane season in the Eastern Pacific this year, estimating a 70 percent chance of 9 to 15 named storms, which includes 5 to 8 hurricanes, 1 to 3 of which are expected to become major hurricanes. NOAA recommends that those in hurricane-prone regions begin preparations for the upcoming season now.
3. In the aftermath of some previous storms, U.S. citizens traveling abroad have encountered uncomfortable and often dangerous conditions that have lasted for several days while awaiting transportation back to the United States. In the past, many U.S. citizens have been forced to delay travel due to infrastructure damage to airports and limited flight availability. Roads were also washed out or obstructed by debris, adversely affecting access to airports and land routes out of affected areas. Reports of looting and sporadic violence in the aftermath of natural disasters are not uncommon. Security personnel may not be readily available to assist at all times. In the event of a hurricane, travelers should be aware that they may not be able to depart the area for 24-48 hours or longer.
4. If a situation requires an evacuation from an overseas location, the Department of State will work with commercial airlines to ensure that U.S. citizens are repatriated as safely and efficiently as possible. Commercial airlines are the Department's primary source of transportation in an evacuation; other means of transport are utilized only as a last resort. The Department of State will not provide no-cost transportation, but does have the authority to provide repatriation loans to those in financial need. We recommend that you obtain travel insurance to cover unexpected expenses during an emergency.
5. If you live in or are traveling to storm-prone regions, prepare for hurricanes and tropical storms by organizing a kit in a waterproof container that includes a supply of bottled water, non-perishable food items, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, and vital documents (especially passport and other identification). Emergency shelters often provide only very basic resources and may have limited medical and food supplies.

Floral Park Road, Belmopan, Cayo
Telephone (501) 822-4011, Fax (501) 822-4050
E-mail: ACSBelize@state.gov
http://belize.usembassy.gov/citizen_services.html



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6. Monitor local radio, local media, and the National Weather Service to be aware of weather developments. Minor tropical storms can develop into hurricanes very quickly, limiting the time available for a safe evacuation. Inform family and friends of your whereabouts and remain in close contact with your tour operator, hotel staff, and local officials for evacuation instructions during a weather emergency.

7. We strongly encourage U.S. citizens to enroll with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) website. By enrolling, you will receive the Embassy's most recent security and safety updates during your trip. Enrollment also ensures that you can be reached during an emergency. While we will do our utmost to assist you in a crisis, be aware that local authorities bear primary responsibility for the welfare of people living or traveling in their jurisdictions.

8. Additional information on hurricanes and storm preparedness can be found on the Department's "Hurricane Season - Know Before You Go" webpage. You can get updated information on travel in the Caribbean from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from outside the United States and Canada, 1-202-501-4444. We also encourage you to check the Country Specific Information Sheet and the Internet site of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate with consular responsibilities for the territory you will be visiting. Follow us on Twitter and become a fan of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' page on Facebook as well.

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