



American Citizen Services Unit  
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo  
Warden Message



**TO:** U.S. Citizens  
**FROM:** ACS Unit  
**DATE:** March 5, 2010  
**SUBJECT:** Security Precautions for March 7 Santo Domingo Carnival Celebrations

---

This Warden Message is to alert U.S. citizens residing in and visiting the Dominican Republic to security issues related to The Carnival de Santo Domingo parade, which is scheduled to take place in Santo Domingo on Sunday, March 7. This parade marks the culmination of Carnival celebrations, and is typically marked by song, dance and revelry. It will be held on the seaside avenue El Malecón. After the official parade breaks up, parties continue throughout the night. Americans should be aware of the use of "vejigas" and látigos, makeshift weapons used to strike passersby who fail to move quickly enough out of the parade's path. The use of these weapons, combined with the Carnival atmosphere, can contribute to a "free-for-all" ambiance.

#### **WHAT TO EXPECT**

##### Road Closures

Avenue of the Malecon is programmed to be closed March 7 for the entire day from Avenue Maximo Gomez, heading east to the Colonial Zone and west to Abraham Lincoln.

Traffic congestion may occur within the entire downtown area.

An increased Police presence will patrol the area against pickpockets and thieves on motorcycles.

#### **SECURITY PRECAUTIONS**

If possible, take advantage of private or "controlled access" viewing stands or vantage points on private property as a means of viewing the parades and festivities.

When possible, avoid walking through or stopping in the large crowds of people that amass immediately adjacent to and along the routes of the processions. Stay to the periphery of condensed activity, as these areas are considered less safe in general.

Avoid getting swept into "Rah Rah" band groups. These spontaneous celebrations tend to be especially raucous and are prime opportunities for criminal elements to take advantage of the unsuspecting participant or observer.

Travel in groups, and stay in groups for the duration of the event. Never leave any person alone in a large crowd with plans to "meet up" later.

Keep a cell phone with you at all times with important numbers programmed.

Avoid wearing flashy or expensive jewelry.

Keep money and wallets in front pocket. Avoid taking purses or other bags, and refrain from putting bags on the ground or hanging loosely from one shoulder

Control alcohol consumption. Intoxicated people tend to lose their sense of vigilance necessary to remain safe in large events of this type. Also, becoming openly intoxicated might increase the chance you are targeted by one of the criminal elements who would also likely be present.

Do not accept drinks from strangers. Drug-laced drinks, even those in closed containers, have been used in some instances to incapacitate victims who are then robbed.

Stay on main roads. Do not take shortcuts when walking to or from the event. Stay on the main roads at all times, even if it is not the most convenient route. Most crimes against persons at events like this occur before or after the event, when people wander onto dark side streets to get back to their vehicle.

Anticipate gridlock.

Avoid confrontations of any type, and quickly move away from any incident of violence or overzealous behavior that might trap you or otherwise risk injury to you. Know your best route of escape and be prepared to move in that direction.

Have a plan. In the instance your group is separated, have a predetermined rally point, along with a drop-dead time to meet at the end of the night.

American citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to register with the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate on the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

For any emergencies involving American citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Embassy. The Consular Section of the Embassy is located at the corner of Cesar Nicolas Penson Street and Máximo Gómez Avenue, Santo Domingo, D.R.; telephone 809-731-4294; after hours emergency telephone 809-221-2171; ACS unit fax 809-689-6142; e-mail [acssantodom@state.gov](mailto:acssantodom@state.gov); web page [www.usemb.gov.do](http://www.usemb.gov.do).