

Security and Safety

Personal Safety at Work, at Home, and on the Street

Personal Safety Tips on the Street

- If possible, don't walk alone during late-night hours. Walk in groups whenever you can — there is always safety in numbers.
- Let a family member or friends know your destination and your estimated time of arrival or return. That way, appropriate authorities can be notified as quickly as possible if there is a problem.
- Stay in well-lit areas as much as possible. Avoid alleys, vacant lots, wooded areas, and other short cuts or secluded areas. They are usually not well lit or heavily traveled.
- Walk on the sidewalk whenever possible. Walk close to the curb, avoiding doorways, bushes, and other potential hiding places.
- If you have to walk in the street, walk facing traffic. A person walking with traffic can be followed, forced into a car, and abducted more easily than a person walking against traffic.
- Walk confidently, directly, and at a steady pace. Don't stop to talk to strangers.
- Wear clothing and shoes that give you freedom of movement. Don't burden yourself with too many packages or items.
- Always be aware of your surroundings. If you are wearing headphones, don't turn up the volume so high that you cannot hear outside noises.
- Never hitchhike or accept rides from strangers.
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash, or displaying expensive jewelry in public.

Basic Street Smarts

- Wherever you are — on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving, waiting for a bus or subway — stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings.
- Send the message that you're calm, confident, and know where you're going.
- Trust your instincts. If something or someone makes you uneasy, avoid the person or leave the area.
- Know the neighborhoods where you live and work.
- Check out the locations of police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, and restaurants, or stores that are open late.

If Someone Tries to Rob You

- Don't resist. Give up your property — don't give up your life.

- Report the crime to the police immediately. Try to remember details; your description of the event will assist in follow up Police investigations. - - Your actions can help prevent others from becoming victims.
- Self-defense measures are most effective when applied as preventive steps — avoiding the crime in the first place.
- These measures include running away, hiding, screaming, and raising an alarm — remember, more people will respond to someone yelling "Fire" than they will to "Help!"

When You're Indoors

- Make sure all doors (don't forget sliding glass doors) and windows have sturdy, well installed locks, and use them. Install a wide-angle peephole in the door. Keep entrances well lit.
- Never open your door to strangers. Offer to make an emergency call while someone waits outside. Check the identification of sales or service people before letting them in. Don't be embarrassed to phone for verification.
- Be wary of isolated spots — apartment laundry rooms, underground garages, parking lots, and offices after business hours. Walk with a friend, co-worker, or security guard, particularly at night.
- Know your neighbors, so you have someone to call or go to if you're uncomfortable or frightened.
- If you come home and see a door or window open, or broken, don't go in. Call the Police from your cell phone, public phone or a neighbor's phone.

When You're Outdoors

- Avoid walking or jogging alone, especially at night. Stay in well-traveled, well-lit areas.
- Wear clothes and shoes that give you freedom of movement.
- Be careful if anyone in a car asks you for directions; if you answer, keep your distance from the car.
- Have your key ready before you reach the door — home, car, or office.
- If you think you're being followed, change direction and head for the nearest Police station.

Safety in Your Vehicle

- Park in areas that will be well lit and well traveled when you return.
- Always lock your car — when you get in and when you get out.
- Look around and under your car and in the back seat before you get in.

- If your car breaks down, lift the hood, lock the doors, and turn on your flashers. Call a family member, friend or roadside assistance on a cell phone. If someone stops, roll the window down slightly and ask the person to call the police or a tow service.
- Don't hitchhike, ever. And don't ever pick up a hitchhiker.
- The crime of "carjacking" – which is stealing a car by force – captures headlines across the US and has occurred in Paraguay. Statistically speaking, however, your chances of being a victim of carjacking are very slim, and taking preventive measures can reduce that risk even more.
- If a carjacker threatens you with a gun or other weapon, give up your car. Don't argue. Your life is definitely worth more than a car.
- Get away from the area as quickly as possible.
- Try to remember what the carjacker looked like — sex, race, age, hair and eye color, special features, clothes.
- Report the crime immediately to the Police and the Consular Section of the Embassy.

Taxi Safety Tips

- Whenever possible, call a radio taxi rather than hailing a taxi on the street.
- If you must hail a taxi on the street, take note of the license plate number and take a good look at the driver before entering the taxi.
- Never enter a taxi that offers the promise of taking you to clubs, bars, or any other unfamiliar location if you did not ask to go there.
- Send a text to a family member or friend with the taxi make, model, and license plate number before getting into the taxi.
- If you find yourself involved in a robbery, be non-confrontational and cooperate with the criminal. Nothing material is as valuable as your safety.
- A list of radio taxi companies in Guayaquil is available on the Consulate's website (<http://guayaquil.usconsulate.gov>). The American Consulate General in Guayaquil and the U.S Government assume no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms listed therein.

Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Safety Tips

- Try to use machines you are familiar with, and try to use terminals located in banks rather than independent terminals. In Quito and Guayaquil, it is recommended that you use ATM inside shopping malls that are well lit with much foot traffic.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Look around before conducting a transaction. If you see anyone or anything suspicious, cancel your transaction and go to another ATM.
- If you must use an ATM after hours, make sure it's well lit.
- Never walk away from an ATM with cash still in hand. If you are going to count your money, do so at the ATM

- When making an ATM transaction from your car, be aware of your surroundings. Keep your eyes and ears open, and keep car doors locked.

Preventing Assaults

- Assaults are basically fights carried out with or without a weapon at home or in a public space, between strangers, (frequently) among friends, acquaintances, or loved ones.
- The most serious assaults are known as "aggravated assaults," "assaults with a deadly weapon," or "assaults with intent to kill."
- Less serious offenses are called "simple assaults." In many cases, simple assaults turn into more serious assaults or even homicides, if the initial argument or fight is not scaled back or resolved quickly.

While some assaults are unavoidable, use the following tips to make sure simple arguments do not turn violent or deadly:

- If you are involved in a heated argument that appears to be turning violent, walk away. If you stay and fight "to prove something," you will only demonstrate poor judgment in almost every instance.
- Avoid excessive drinking, or if you have been drinking, recognize its impact on your judgment. Alcohol is a contributing factor in many assaults.
- If you see an assault in progress in the Guayaquil area, dial 1-1-2 immediately to alert the police. Do not jump into the fray, unless it is a last resort to prevent more serious injury.

If you are the victim of a crime report it immediately to the Police and the Consular Section of the Embassy.