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ACS News

Official Newsletter for American Citizens in Istanbul



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Dear Americans,

Spring is here and Tax Day is around the corner. In this quarter's newsletter edition, we're sharing updated information for U.S. taxpayers living overseas. In light of the recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, we've provided general emergency preparedness guidance. This information, as well as general earthquake preparedness guidance, can be found on our website, http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov/emergency_preparedness.html. Finally, please don't forget to register to vote. New regulations require that overseas voters must request an absentee ballot every calendar year.

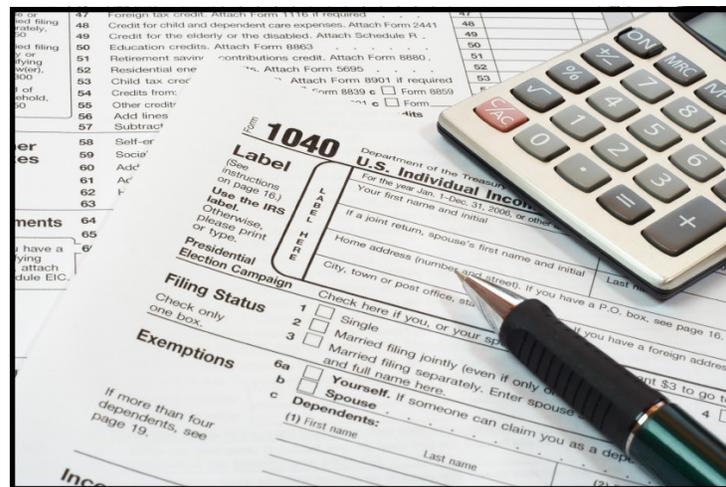
Lisa Gisvold
Chief, American Citizen Services
U.S. Consulate General
Istanbul, Turkey

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Tax Corner

Did you know that the IRS has developed several tools to help you this tax season? The brochure 4732, Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Living Abroad is available at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4732.pdf>. In addition, the IRS has created a new comprehensive tax page on <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html> which is directed to U.S. citizens who reside abroad. This page contains basic tax information that Americans overseas need to know and also includes links to more detailed topics, such as the foreign earned income exclusion, foreign tax credit, reporting foreign bank accounts, Fulbright grants, state taxes, and a myriad of others. Rather than navigating through www.irs.gov, this page will provide "one stop shopping" for U.S. citizens abroad. The site also provides information on how to contact the IRS to get additional assistance.



Emergency Preparedness

Among the highest priorities of the Department of State and our missions abroad is the safety and security of locally-resident Americans overseas. In the past year, the Department has intervened to assist in the evacuation of Americans from half a dozen countries throughout the world, as a result of serious political or economic unrest, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks. Hundreds of expatriate Americans each year are forced by personal emergencies (e.g. death or illness in the family) to return to the U.S. on short notice. Evacuations, especially under crisis conditions, are inevitably very disruptive and distressing for those involved. The State Department routinely provides standard advice to its employees on prudent steps to take to ensure they would be prepared in the event of such an evacuation. This and other advice on crisis preparedness is available on the State Department's website (<http://travel.state.gov>), and we are summarizing the main points below. The Consulate General Istanbul has provided this information on our website (<http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov>) and commends these elementary steps to you for your careful consideration.

- Assemble all vital documents such as passports, birth and marriage records, vaccination, insurance and bank records in one readily accessible location.

- Check to be sure that your passport and any necessary visas are valid and that you are registered at the Consulate General Istanbul with your current address and phone number. If you need to obtain a new passport or to update your registration, please do so at the Consulate General Istanbul as soon as possible.
- Make or update as necessary a complete inventory of your household effects, in duplicate.
- Maintain an adequate supply of food, water, and necessary medications in your home. Make sure your car is in good working order. Keep the gas tank full and check oil, coolant, tires, and battery.

We do not want American citizens to become unduly alarmed. These are precautionary measures only. Given the potential for acts of violence, terrorism, or anti-American demonstrations, we believe it is important for all citizens to maintain readiness for all possibilities in case of an emergency. We will promptly inform you of any significant developments and advise you accordingly.

What is a Warden Message?

Warden messages contain information deemed vital by Consulate General Istanbul for the American public and is often disseminated through our wardens and always posted on our website. To keep informed of the latest warden messages, please visit our website, <http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov>. If you are in contact with a large number of American citizens in the Istanbul area and are interested in volunteering to become a warden, please send an email to acs_istanbul@state.gov.



Register to Vote

Don't lose your opportunity to exercise your basic right! Another federal election year is about to begin. Make sure you take part. Per new regulations, states are no longer required to mail you a ballot for upcoming elections, even if you voted in the last one. So overseas voters will have to request an absentee ballot every calendar year. The State Department recommends that all American overseas voters re-register every January. If you have not yet re-registered this year, you can do so at www.overseasvotefoundation.org or www.fvap.gov.