

**EMERGENCY MESSAGE TO U.S. CITIZENS**  
**U.S. Embassy, Manila, Philippines**  
**July 19, 2011**

*THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO U.S. CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD. THANK YOU.*

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**Juvenile Pickpocket Gangs**  
**Personal Protective Measures**

Several U.S. citizens have recently been victims of juvenile pickpocket gangs operating in the Malate neighborhood of Manila city. This neighborhood is near the U.S. Embassy and is frequented by tourists.

These pickpocket gangs are comprised of street children between the ages of six and twelve, usually accompanied by an elderly man who acts as the ringleader. Appearing to be homeless, they begin their attack by demanding money from non-Filipino tourists. They aggressively follow the tourists and eventually swarm around them, surreptitiously stealing personal items such as wallets and cell phones. When the victims begin to protest, the children leave and continue walking down the street.

There have been confirmed reports of this type of pickpocket gang victimizing tourists in Cebu City as well.

You should practice the "common sense" security measures outlined below:

- Pay attention to surroundings, realizing that crime can occur anywhere, anytime.
- If you notice a group of children approaching you, try to cross the street or avoid them. If they continue to follow or harass you, seek assistance from a local establishment's security guard or door escort. The gangs usually leave once they encounter authority figures.
- Don't wear a lot of jewelry and don't display large amounts of cash.

- If possible, do not carry a purse or backpack - and carry only the items you need.
- Consider not carrying a wallet, but instead keeping cash, IDs, credit cards, etc., in pockets.
- Avoid public transit - Jeepneys, LRT and the MRT are prime venues for pickpockets.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages excessively, which could make you an easy target.
- Whenever possible, do not venture into public venues, unknown or dimly lit areas alone.

You can stay in touch and get Embassy updates by checking the Embassy website, found at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>. You can also get global updates at the U.S. Department of State's, [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#) where you can find the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information. If you don't have internet access, we have a call center for updates--1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines and can be contacted at:

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