

Express Kidnappings in Arequipa

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Due to the increase over the last year of so-called express kidnapping, the US Embassy has prohibited its personnel from using “street taxis” in and around the city of Arequipa. An express kidnapping occurs when a victim is abducted, sometimes beaten, and is forced to withdraw money out of ATM's. Kidnappers also take possession of all valuables such as watches, credit cards, cash, cellular phones, and jewelry. Once the kidnapper is satisfied and/or the ATM and credit cards have been exhausted, the victim is usually released. In some cases, however, the victim has been sexually assaulted or even killed. A common method of abduction is via street taxi. After hailing a taxi (or what appears to be a taxi) off the street, the taxi driver takes the passenger to a predetermined location where armed collaborators are allowed to enter the taxi, control the passenger and facilitate the robbery.

A list of legitimate taxi companies with radio dispatchers operating in Arequipa has been posted on the embassy website, [please click here to access the list](#). Restricting use to taxi cabs with telephone/radio dispatch does not guarantee the safety of the passenger; however, it is a means of risk mitigation that will decrease the probability of being a victim of an express kidnapping or other crime associated with unlicensed taxi cabs. While not prohibited, Embassy security continues to discourage the use of street taxis while travelling in Lima and other cities in Peru.

Personal Security Recommendations When Using Taxis

- Call taxi companies yourself or ask your hotel to call one for you. Request a taxi identification number from the dispatcher.
- Before getting into the car, verify that the taxi company and the car/driver identification number match the information you were given over the phone. Consider taking a photo of the license plate.
- Call a friend and communicate the taxi cab number, company name, name of the driver, your point of origin and destination – let the driver hear you conveying all of this information.
- Ensure that no one else is in the car, luggage is secured in the trunk, purses/handbags are stored on the floor and all door locks work properly.

End of Warden Message