

Security Message for U.S. Citizens - U.S. Embassy Quito, Ecuador
Holiday Season Safety and Security Advisory
December 5, 2014

The U.S. Embassy informs U.S. citizens that holiday celebrations begin in Ecuador on December 5. These celebrations include Quito Days (December 5-7 cultural festival), Christmas, and New Year's Eve. During this time you should remain particularly vigilant due to a seasonal surge in crime. Additionally, the threat of street crime (e.g. purse snatchings, pickpockets) is high in areas where there are large crowds. U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance, be aware of local events, and take appropriate steps to bolster their personal security during the holiday season.

Below are some tips to be safe and to help you reduce your vulnerability during this holiday season:

In your home:

- Beware of strangers posing as representatives of charitable organizations, police officers, or other solicitors. They may be casing your house.
- Never automatically open the door. Always verify the identity of the visitor through the optical viewer, the intercom, or a window from which you cannot be observed. If you know the person, ensure that no strangers might be forcing them to have the door opened.
- Be aware of persons loitering on your street or in your neighborhood. They may be criminals conducting surveillance. Call the police if you're suspicious of a loiterer.
- Make a habit of keeping doors double locked (dead bolted) even when you are in the house.
- Get in the habit of setting your alarm, even when you are at home.
- Don't place holiday gifts where they can be seen from outside the home.

If you are going to be away for the holidays:

- Strictly limit the number of people who know of your intention to leave your residence vacant overnight. Be careful of disclosing travel plans to domestic employees.

- Ask a trusted friend or neighbor to check on your house occasionally, making sure your house keeps a "somebody's at home" look.

In your car:

- Drive defensively. The number of drunk drivers greatly increases during the holidays.
- Always drive with your windows up and doors locked, especially in city traffic.
- Wear your seat belt and ensure small children are secured in size-appropriate safety seats properly mounted in the rear of your vehicle.
- Carry your cell phone with you whenever you are traveling by car, no matter how short the journey. In the event of an accident, your cell phone is your lifeline to emergency medical assistance and security support.
- Don't leave valuables in your vehicle – in the seat or in the trunk. Return home to drop off your purchases rather than leave them in the car.
- Be careful returning home from shopping. A vehicle full of gifts is a target for a follow-home robbery.
- When in crawling or stopped in traffic, leave at least a half car length between you and the car ahead to allow space to exit rapidly if necessary.

Attending/hosting holiday parties:

- Do not drink and drive.
- If you are hosting a party, arrange alternate transportation for intoxicated guests.
- If you are attending a party, know your safe drink limit. If you exceed it, call a radio taxi or ask someone to drive you home.
- Do not hail a taxi on the street.

While shopping:

- Remember exactly where you parked your car. Make a mental note or write it down if necessary. Wandering around a parking garage or parking lot is an invitation for trouble.

- When shopping, carry only as many bags as you can comfortably control. Ensure that nothing can be easily snatched from your grasp. Do not bring bags to your car in order to make a second trip for shopping.
- Your wallet, keys and cell phone should be in a secure location, and you should be especially wary of pickpockets. Have your keys out and ready as you approach your vehicle. Someone fumbling for keys with an armload of packages is a prime target for a mugging or carjacking.
- Be alert to your surroundings. If someone is watching you too closely, is following you, or is loitering near your vehicle, return to the store or contact the police and request help. Criminals often work in teams in order to divert a victim's attention. Be wary of anyone who attempts to draw your attention away from your belongings and surroundings.
- If you're paying cash for your purchases, don't show any more cash than is necessary. Split up your money into different pockets.
- Keep just the credit cards you routinely use in your wallet. Keep any unused cards out of your wallet and in a safe place.

Happy Holidays!!

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Ecuador enroll in the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the [State Department's website](#), where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read [the Country Specific Information for Ecuador](#). For additional information, please refer to our "[Traveler's Checklist](#)" page. Updated information on travel and security in Ecuador may also be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States or by calling 1-202-501-4444 outside the United States.

Contact information:

U.S. Embassy Quito

Avigiras E12-170 y Eloy Alfaro.

Phone (593-2) 398-5000

ACSQuito@state.gov

<http://ecuador.usembassy.gov/>

U.S. Consulate General Guayaquil

Avenida Jose Rodriguez Bonin and Calle Santa Ana, San Eduardo

Phone (593-4) 371-7000 ACSGuayaquil@state.gov

<http://guayaquil.usconsulate.gov/>

Dialing instructions within Ecuador:

- Within the same city and from a land line use the last seven digits.
- For calls from a mobile phone and for intercity telephone calls add the city code preceded by a 0.

Dialing instructions from the United States:

- Add the 011 prefix for an international long distance line.

For after-hours emergencies, call the phone numbers listed above for assistance.