

**U.S. Consulate General St. Petersburg, Russia**  
**SECURITY MESSAGE FOR U.S. CITIZENS**  
**SECURITY AWARENESS DURING THE NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAYS**  
**December 28, 2012**

The U.S. Consulate General reminds U.S. citizens to maintain a heightened sense of vigilance and security awareness during the 2012-13 winter holiday season. Russian winter holidays are often characterized by large public gatherings. There are public fireworks shows in many locations on New Year's Eve. Police are expected in large numbers to maintain order, but any large gathering can be an inviting target for criminals and terrorists. While the Consulate General has no information about specific threats, anyone who attends such events should be wary of their surroundings and immediately leave the area if they see anything suspicious.

St. Petersburg, like any large city in the world, also experiences a significant amount of criminal activity, some of which involves violence. Individuals traveling alone and especially those who have been drinking alcohol are perceived by criminals as easy targets, and are therefore especially vulnerable to assault and robbery. Criminals look for such victims in or around nightclubs and bars, at festivals or other large public gatherings, or on their way home during early morning hours. The Consulate General strongly recommends not traveling alone and making sure someone knows where you are and when you are expected to return home.

The vast majority of U.S. citizens are unaffected by crime or violence during their stay in Russia. Exercising prudent personal safety precautions such as those recommended below is the best way to avoid being a victim of crime or being caught in hostile crowd motivated by violence.

**Personal Safety Reminders:**

- **DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE.** When driving, stay alert and aware. Winter road conditions, city traffic, and the increased number of drunk drivers make holiday driving especially challenging. Avoid distracted driving – stay off the phone when behind the wheel. And, as always, use a designated driver when attending celebrations.
- Metro travel during the holidays (specifically New Year's) will witness large crowds and sometimes there will be intoxicated celebrants. Maintain awareness of your immediate surroundings, especially in crowds or on public transportation. Avoid groups of people who appear to be intoxicated.
- When using the Metro, keep your fare card accessible. Do not rummage through your wallet or purse for your card.
- Avoid traveling alone, especially at night. Use the "buddy system."
- Avoid using unmarked/unlicensed or "gypsy" taxis, especially at night, if someone other than the driver is in the vehicle.
- Consume alcohol in moderation and always keep an eye on your drink. People who have been drinking have impaired awareness and judgment and are specifically targeted by criminals. Drink drugging is occasionally utilized as a precursor to robbery or assault.
- Carry a mobile phone and the number of the police or someone to call for help in the case of an emergency.

Thank you for your cooperation and have a safe and happy holiday season.

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*We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Russia enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step>. 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 at <http://travel.state.gov>, where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for Russia at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_4965.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html). For additional information, refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" on the State Department's website.

Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free from within the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on Twitter at <https://mobile.twitter.com/travelgov> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/travelgov>, and download our free Smart Traveler iPhone App at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smart-traveler/id442693988?mt=8> to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg is located at 15 Furshatskaya Street and is open 9:00 am – 17:30 pm, telephone 7- 812- 331-2600. Appointments are required for all non-emergency services. The American Citizen Services Unit at the Consulate General assists U.S. citizens in northwest Russia. We can help you with passport issuance and renewal, voter assistance, notariats, and registering a child born abroad. We also provide emergency services for U.S. citizens in case of a disaster or in case of illness, arrest, death or destitution while in northwest Russia. You may obtain additional information, and make appointments online, at our website: <http://stpetersburg.usconsulate.gov/>. You may contact our American Citizen Services Unit by e-mail at [StPetersburgACS@state.gov](mailto:StPetersburgACS@state.gov), by fax at 7-812-331-2646 or by telephone at 7- 812- 331-2600. If you have an emergency after normal business hours, please call our telephone number and you will be given instruction on how to contact the Consulate Duty Officer.