



McAllen Economic Development Corporation Contact Information

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www.medc.org

You can also find us on:



Useful Information for Border Travel McAllen, Texas / Reynosa, Mexico

Please note: The following information has been collected and summarized from various sources. Links / references are provided for further information.

McAllen Economic Development Corporation

Keith Patridge (956) 682-2875

RAMMAC

(899) 922-8746

Martha Ramos RADIO 62*15*258087

Tamaulipas Special Police Force In Reynosa (PET)

Nextel Contacts:

Alberto Ortiz: 62*15*25674

Juan Carlos Gomez: 62*227351*13

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS - MCALLEN, TX

FBI - McAllen Office

(956) 984-6300 (regular business hours)

Ask for the Duty Agent

FBI - San Antonio (Main Office)

(210) 225-6741 (24/7)

Ask for the Duty Agent in McAllen, the operator will patch the call.

FBI - Reporting information via the Internet

www.fbi.gov (left column) "Submit a Crime Tip"

The more details provided the better. It is always preferred that the person reporting the information provide a contact e-mail or telephone for follow up.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS - REYNOSA, MX

Emergency Equivalent to 911 in Reynosa

066

Reynosa Police

Phone: +52-899-932-3333

Contact: Lic. Juan Jose Muñiz Salinas.-Director

Federal Police-Reynosa Office

Phone: +52-899-925-0606

Contact: Inspector General Juan Antonio Zamarroni

Mexican Army – Reynosa

Phone: +52-899-926-7092

Regional U.S. Consulate – Matamoros, Tamps.

Phone: +52-868-812-4402 (phone is with someone 24 hours)

Fax: +52-868-812-2171

After Hours Emergencies: 044-868-818-1507 (from inside Mexico)

044-868-812-4402 (phone is with someone 24 hrs/day)

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBER - BRIDGE CROSSING

(IF NEED TO CROSS SOMEONE QUICKLY IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION)

**HIDALGO/PHARR INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE - CUSTOMS & BORDER PATROL
(CBP) COMMAND CENTER
(956) 843-5701**

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE – U.S. STATE DEPT.

1-888-407-4747 (From overseas: 202-501-4444)

U.S. Consulate in Matamoros (covering all of Northeast Mexico, including Reynosa)
From within Mexico: 044-868-812-4402 (phone is with someone 24 hrs/day)

OSAC (Overseas Security Advisory Council) – Reporting an incident via the internet
www.osac.gov

Preparedness / further info:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html

ABOUT THE U.S. CONSULATE FOR THE REGION

Source: <http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/matamoros/Hours.html>

Location and Hours

The Consulate is located in Matamoros, Mexico directly across the border from Brownsville, TX. The U.S. mailing address is P.O. Box 9004, Brownsville, Texas 78520. The street address is Calle Primera #2002, Col. Jardin, Matamoros, Tamps, 87330.

The Consulate's business hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 PM. However, non-immigrant visa interviews are by prior appointment only (click on Visas for details) and the American Citizen Services section is open weekdays from 9:00 AM to Noon and 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Source: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

When you travel, the odds are in your favor that you will have a safe and incident-free trip. The following tips are available to help you avoid difficulties during your travel.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

General entry and visa information for Mexico are available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_970.html#requirements.

Updated information on requirements for U.S. Citizens traveling outside the U.S.:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html
http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready_set_go/

Specific document requirements for land travel effective January 31, 2008:
http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready_set_go/land_travel/chnge_in_proced.xml

Information on how, when and where to apply for your U.S. passport is available in [Passports: Applying for Them the Easy Way](#) .

Information about Local Ports of Entry* (Addresses, Phone Nos. & Hrs.):

Source: <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contacts/ports/tx/2305.xml>

Hidalgo Port of Entry (Passenger)

(956) 843-5700

Hours of Operation: Twenty Four (24) Hours A Day, Seven Days A Week (7)

Pharr Passenger

(956) 283-2035

Hours of Operation: 6:00 AM-12:00 AM (Central), Seven Days A Week (7)

* A port of entry is any designated place at which a CBP officer is authorized to accept entries of merchandise to collect duties, and to enforce the various provisions of the customs and navigation laws (19 CFR 101.1).

CUSTOMS & IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

Source: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/prohibited_restricted.xml

Customs Restrictions of Foreign Destinations (What You Can't Take to Other Countries)

Many countries have restrictions on what may be brought into the country, including food, pets (see "[Taking a Pet Overseas](#)" under "[Passports and Other Travel Documents](#)," below), and medications. Even over-the-counter medications may be prohibited in some countries. Check with the embassy of Mexico as to prohibited items. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for Mexico at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_970.html.

U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, see the Customs and Border Protection booklet "Know Before You Go," available at

<http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/toolbox/publications/travel/knowbeforeyougo.ctt/knowbeforeyougo.pdf>

<http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg>

For further information, see

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/prohibited_restricted.xml on the same website.

ANTI-CORRUPTION REFERENCE INFORMATION

Source: www.transparency.org

Corruption Awareness / Anti-Corruption Information

Transparency International (TI) is "the global coalition against corruption" and provides facts on corruption, links, surveys, indices, corruption perceptions index.

The following is a link to TI's corruptions perceptions index, which ranks countries on their perceived corruption levels:

http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi

Link to the Global Corruption Report 2007 - Free and downloadable from the website, it includes references such as the "anti-corruption handbook," and "preventing corruption in construction projects."

<http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr>

NEWS/OTHER SOURCES

www.worldpress.org

www.state.gov

<http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm> : information on intellectual property crime.

Spanish:

www.elmananadigital.com

www.onlineadirecta.info (News of Tamaulipas)

www.lajornada.unam.mx

www.pgr.gob.mx (Procuraduria General de la Republica)

www.prensaescrita.com/america/tamaulipas.php

Specific to Mexico:

<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/mx/> On the Mexico link; there is a reference to crime.

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_970.html specifically addresses travel to Mexico (including travel alerts).

Safety on the Street

- **Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home.**
- Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets.
- Try not to travel alone at night.
- Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.
- Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments.
- Try to avoid using hand gestures unless you are sure of their meaning. The wrong gesture can bring on problems when none would have existed.
- Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.
- Avoid scam artists by being wary of strangers who approach you and offer to be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices.
- Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will:
 - jostle you,
 - ask you for directions or the time,
 - point to something spilled on your clothing,
 - distract you by creating a disturbance.
- Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.
- Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.
- Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. Try to ask for directions only from individuals in authority.
- Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.
- Learn a few phrases in the local language or have them handy in written form so that you can signal your need for police or medical help.
- Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- If you are confronted, don't fight back -- give up your valuables.
- Avoid areas where you can be cornered, when possible. If you think you are being watched or followed, go into a crowded restaurant, bar or other public place and have them call you a taxi.

Safety When You Drive

- Make certain your vehicle is in good repair. If possible, use a car with universal door locks and power windows, features that give the driver better control of access. An air conditioner is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars.
- Keep car doors locked at all times. Wear seat belts.
- As much as possible, avoid driving at night.
- Don't leave valuables in the car. If you must carry things with you, keep them out of sight locked in the trunk, and then take them with you when you leave the car.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Don't get out of the car if there are suspicious looking individuals nearby. Drive away.
- Vary your routine.
- When you rent a car, choose a type that is commonly available locally. Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed.
- If you take a taxi, only use those clearly identified with official markings. Beware of unmarked cabs.

Patterns of Crime Against Motorists

- Carjackers and thieves operate at gas stations, parking lots, in city traffic and along the highway. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention when you are in or near your car.
- Criminals use ingenious ploys. They may pose as good Samaritans, offering help for tires that they claim are flat or that they have made flat. Or they may flag down a motorist, ask for assistance, and then steal the rescuer's luggage or car. Usually they work in groups, one person carrying on the pretense while the others rob you.
- Other criminals get your attention with abuse, either trying to drive you off the road, or causing an "accident" by rear-ending you.
- In some urban areas, thieves don't waste time on ploys, they simply smash car windows at traffic lights, grab your valuables or your car and get away. In cities around the world, "defensive driving" has come to mean more than avoiding auto accidents; it means keeping an eye out for potentially criminal pedestrians, cyclists and scooter riders.

Safety in Your Hotel

- Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby.

- Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.
- If you are out late at night, let someone know when you expect to return.
- If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.
- Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire, and be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located. (Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit; this could be a lifesaver if you have to crawl through a smoke-filled corridor.)

BEFORE YOU GO

What to Take

- To help avoid becoming a target, do not dress so as to mark yourself as affluent. Expensive-looking jewelry, for instance, can draw the wrong attention.
- If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair.
- Pack an extra set of passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport's information page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen.
- Consider getting a telephone calling card. It is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas location(s).

What to Leave Behind

- Don't bring anything you would hate to lose. Leave at home:
 - valuable or expensive-looking jewelry
 - irreplaceable family objects
 - all unnecessary credit cards
 - your Social Security card, library card, and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency.
- Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license and the credit cards that you plan to bring with you. Leave one photocopy of this data with family or friends at home; pack the other in a place separate from where you carry the originals.

Register your travel

It is a good idea to register your travel with the State Department so that you may be contacted if need be, whether because of a family emergency in the U.S., or because of a crisis in the area in which you are traveling. Travel registration is a free service provided

by the State Department, and is easily accomplished online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. (In accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release information on your welfare or whereabouts to inquirers without your express written authorization.)

Credit

Make a note of the credit limit on each credit card that you bring, and avoid charging over that limit while traveling. Americans have been arrested for innocently exceeding their credit limit. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. 1-800 numbers do not work from abroad, but your company should have a number that you can call while you are overseas.

Insurance

Verify personal property and health insurance coverage abroad. Medicare and Medicaid do not provide payment for medical care outside the United States. Even if your health insurance will reimburse you for medical care that you pay for abroad, health insurance usually does not pay for medical evacuation from a remote area or from a country where medical facilities are inadequate. Consider purchasing a policy designed for travelers, and covering short-term health and emergency assistance, as well as medical evacuation in the event of an accident or serious illness.

How to Handle Money Safely

- Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.
- Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets or purchase souvenirs.
- If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of your plight.
- After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of:
 - travelers' checks to the nearest agent of the issuing company
 - credit cards to the issuing company
 - airline tickets to the airline or travel agent
 - passport to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate

How to Avoid Legal Difficulties

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction. You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor infractions in the United States. Familiarize yourself with legal expectations in the countries you will visit. Some of the offenses for which U.S. citizens have been arrested abroad are:

Drug Violations

More than 1/3 of U.S. citizens incarcerated abroad are held on drug charges. A number of Americans have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines that they purchased legally elsewhere.

Other U.S. citizens have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Possession of Firearms/Ammunition

Places where U.S. citizens most often experience difficulties for illegal possession of firearms are nearby - Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean. Sentences for possession of firearms or ammunition in Mexico can be up to 30 years. In general, firearms or ammunition, even those legally registered in the U.S., cannot be brought into a country unless a permit is obtained in advance from the embassy or a consulate of that country and the firearm is registered with foreign authorities on arrival. Check with U.S. Customs at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/prohibited_restricted.xml before your trip.

Photography

In many countries you can be detained for photographing security-related institutions, such things as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transportation facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Purchasing Antiques

Americans have been arrested for purchasing souvenirs that were, or looked like, antiques and which local customs authorities believed were national treasures. This is especially true in Turkey, Egypt and Mexico. Familiarize yourself with any local regulations of antiques. In countries with strict control of antiques, document your purchases as reproductions if that is the case, or if they are authentic, secure the necessary export permit (often from the national museum).

Terrorism

Most terrorist attacks are the result of careful planning. Just as a car thief will first be attracted to an unlocked car with the key in the ignition, terrorists are looking for the most accessible targets. The chances that a tourist, traveling with an unpublished program or itinerary, would be the victim of terrorism are slight. In addition, many terrorist groups, seeking publicity for political causes within their own country or region, may not be looking for American targets. Nevertheless, the following pointers may help you avoid becoming a target of opportunity. They should be considered as adjuncts to the tips listed in the previous sections on how to protect yourself against the far greater likelihood of being a victim of crime. These precautions may provide some degree of protection, and can serve as practical and psychological deterrents to would-be terrorists.

- Be cautious about what you discuss with strangers or what others may overhear.
- Try to minimize the time spent in the public area of an airport, which is a less protected area. Move quickly from the check-in counter to the secured areas.
- Leave no personal or business papers in your hotel room.
- Watch for people following you or "loiterers" observing your comings and goings.

- Keep a mental note of safe havens, such as police stations, hotels, and hospitals. Formulate a plan of action for what you will do if a bomb explodes or there is gunfire nearby.
- Report any suspicious activity to local police, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- Select your own taxicabs at random. Don't take a vehicle that is not clearly identified as a taxi. Compare the face of the driver with the one on his or her posted license.
- Refuse unexpected packages.
- Check for loose wires or other suspicious activity around your car.
- If you are ever in a situation where somebody starts shooting, drop to the floor or get down as low as possible. Don't move until you are sure the danger has passed. Do not attempt to help rescuers and do not pick up a weapon. If possible, shield yourself behind a solid object. If you must move, crawl on your stomach.

Hijacking/Hostage Situations

While every hostage situation is different, there are some general considerations to keep in mind.

- The U.S. Government's policy is firm: we do not make concessions to terrorists. When Americans are abducted overseas, we look to the host government to exercise its responsibility under international law to protect all persons within its territories and to bring about the safe release of hostages. We work closely with these governments from the outset of a hostage-taking incident to ensure that our citizens and other victims are released as quickly and safely as possible.
- At the outset of a terrorist incident, the terrorists typically are tense, high-strung and may behave irrationally. It is extremely important that you remain calm and alert and manage your own behavior.
- Avoid resistance and sudden or threatening movements. Do not struggle or try to escape unless you are certain of being successful. Don't try to be a hero, endangering yourself and others.
- Consciously put yourself in a mode of passive cooperation. Talk normally. Do not complain, avoid belligerency, and comply with all orders and instructions.
- If questioned, keep your answers short. Don't volunteer information or make unnecessary overtures.
- Make a concerted effort to relax. Prepare yourself mentally, physically and emotionally for the possibility of a long ordeal.

- Try to remain inconspicuous, avoid direct eye contact and the appearance of observing your captors' actions.
 - Avoid alcoholic beverages. Eat what they give you, even if it does not look or taste appetizing, but keep consumption of food and drink at a moderate level. A loss of appetite and weight is normal.
 - If you are involved in a lengthier, drawn-out situation, try to establish a rapport with your captors, avoiding political discussions or other confrontational subjects.
 - Establish a daily program of mental and physical activity.
 - Think positively. Avoid a sense of despair. Rely on your inner resources. Remember that you are a valuable commodity to your captors. It is important to them to keep you alive and well.
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