

Avoiding Crime in Belize City

Due to a recent increase in violent crimes, including machete choppings, shootings, armed robberies of persons and businesses, armed bank robberies, etc., near the Embassy and in areas that Embassy personnel frequent, the following security and safety tips are provided. Given the demonstrated willingness of the criminal element in Belize City to use deadly force, it is increasingly important for all employees and family members to be “situationally aware at all times”.

For Americans living overseas, the most serious obstacle to personal safety is an attitude of complacency or fatalism. “It can’t happen to me”, “it won’t happen here”, and “if it’s going to happen, it’s going to happen” is dangerous thinking.

Today, the most prevalent threat you face in Belize is crime. A criminal attack against you or your family can take place at any time or any place, as can a fire or other disaster. However, you can influence what happens to you by assuming more responsibility for your own security.

* Before walking or driving into a business (particularly banks, gas stations and shopping plazas), restaurant, parking lot, etc; perform a quick visual check to see if anything seems out of the ordinary. You do not want to walk into a business or drive into a gas station during an armed robbery. If something seems wrong – **it probably is**.

* Belize City is relatively small and neighborhoods of different qualities are close to each other and easily transitable. Regardless, generally speaking, the area of Belize City south of the Belize River should not be visited, particularly at night or while alone, with the exception of daytime visits to the downtown area immediately across from the Swing Bridge at the end of Queen Street.

* There are a number of locations near the Embassy, particularly some local shortcuts, that one should avoid at all times.

* Should you find yourself the victim of a robbery or other crime, only you can decide your course of action; however, material items can be replaced and it is generally preferable that you comply with a robber’s instructions. It is always best to leave valuables and large amounts of cash locked up in a secure location

* Moving about in groups, staying in well-lit areas, avoiding short-cuts, dressing and acting conservatively, and most importantly, being aware of what is going on around you and avoiding risky or volatile situations, are some of the most common measures.

*Assailants tend to prey on people who appear preoccupied or confused, so the primary rule of street smarts is to stay alert and aware of your surroundings.