

RED, WHITE, & BLUE

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES NEWSLETTER

• October - December 2019 •



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From the Desk of the Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs

Welcome to Autumn and to the latest edition of the Mission Saudi Arabia quarterly American Citizen Services Newsletter. I know many of us travelled back to the United States over the Summer and I hope everyone has returned relaxed and inspired for a successful year ahead.



It has certainly been an eventful last few months in the Kingdom.

Ambassador Abizaid had his initial meeting with the American community at the Embassy's Annual Town Hall on September 12 and the Consulate General in Jeddah moved to its new facility on September 20. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched its new tourist visa system on September 27 (more inside this newsletter). As always, the security and welfare of the American community remains uppermost in our minds; on September 17, the State Department updated the Travel Advisory for Saudi Arabia. In this edition of the newsletter, we remind you of what steps you can take to improve your emergency preparedness and again invite you to sign up to receive SMS alerts on fast-breaking information relevant to your security.

In closing, I want to note that Dhahran Consular Section Chief Vito DiPaola will shortly be retiring after a long and distinguished career with the State Department. While we look forward to welcoming his replacement, Catherine Clum, I know you will join me in thanking Vito for his service to our country and wishing him a well-deserved happy retirement.

Sean Murphy

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"Exercise increased caution in Saudi Arabia due to **terrorism** and the threat of **missile** and **drone attacks** on civilian targets."



Saudi Arabia's Travel Advisory was updated on September 17, 2019

- Read the full Saudi Arabia Travel Advisory at travel.state.gov
- Enroll in the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Follow us on Twitter ([@KSA_ACS](https://twitter.com/KSA_ACS)).
- To receive security-related alerts via text message, please enroll in our new SMS Message System at [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/USKSAALERTS](https://tinyurl.com/USKSAALERTS)

Emergency Preparedness



Basic Disaster Supplies Kit



Make sure your emergency kit is stocked with the items such as water, food, batteries, a flashlight and first aid kit, and maps. Most of the items are inexpensive and easy to find, and any one of them could save your life. Headed to the store? Download a **"Build a Kit" list** to take with you. Once you take a look at the basic items, consider what unique needs your family might have, such as supplies for pets, or seniors.

After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having your own food, water and other supplies to last for at least 72 hours. A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency.

For more information on building and maintaining a disaster/emergency supply kit, go the **Ready.gov** website for useful suggestions and instructions.

Be Prepared to Leave

- Make sure your passport has plenty of validity. We recommend at least 6 months and two or more blank pages. Don't forget to check your children's passports--they expire every 5 years! You can find information about renewing passports on **our website**.
- Be sure your iqama is valid and that you have a valid exit visa.
- Create an emergency go-bag for each member of your family that includes your passports, certificates of birth abroad for children born overseas, cash in the local currency, cell phone with charger, copies of personal documents (school documents, medical records, etc), and extra clothing. If you have pets, be sure to have their vaccination records.
- If you take medication, make sure to have at least seven days' worth at any given time and have a copy of your prescriptions handy.



SIGN UP FOR SMS ALERTS

If you wish to receive important announcements via text message enroll in our SMS alert system at:

[https:// Tinyurl.com/USKSAAAlerts](https://Tinyurl.com/USKSAAAlerts)

Messaging and Data Rates May Apply



REGISTER FOR STEP

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service for Americans to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

<https://step.state.gov/STEP>

Stay Informed, Stay Connected, Stay Safe!

New! Saudi Tourist Visas



On September 27, the Saudi government began issuing tourist visas to American citizens. American citizens may now apply for an "e-visa" online prior to visiting the Kingdom, or at an airport upon arrival. Saudi e-visas are generally valid for one year; the maximum allowable stay during a visit is three months. The U.S. government has no control over the issuance or denial of Saudi entry or exit visas and issuance of a visa does not

guarantee entry. Persons holding tourist visas are not authorized to work or study and will not be able to open bank accounts or perform other bureaucratic procedures for which a residence permit (iqama) is required.

Public Decency: Saudi officials simultaneously released new guidelines for "public decency" for foreign visitors to the Kingdom. Visitors are instructed to dress "modestly," but abayas and head coverings are not required for female visitors. The guidelines, which are available on the [Visit Saudi](#) website, include prohibitions on taking photos of persons without their permission, cutting in line, playing loud music, and wearing clothing with profane or obscene images.

Exit controls: Please be advised that American citizens, especially if admitted to the Kingdom on a work visa, may still need the permission of a male guardian and/or sponsor to exit the country and will likely need to apply for an exit visa from the Saudi government.



Consular Updates



CG Ryan Gliha and staff, wearing commemorative "#itshappening" t-shirts, join U.S. Marines in raising the flag over the new consulate facility

Consulate-General Jeddah said goodbye to its old compound and raised the flag at the New Consulate Compound on September 20. Moving the Consular Section to the new compound was a complex operation that required months of planning and coordination between various offices, but thanks to a carefully organized effort, there was minimum disruption to consular services. Section staff are enjoying their new, modern digs in north Jeddah.

You can visit the new consulate on Al Safa Street, Al Muhammadiyah District, near the new American School building. Phone: +966 12 220 5000 ext. 3350 Email: JeddahACS@state.gov

On September 18, Consulate General Dhahran hosted a Town Hall at the Dhahran International School. Consul General Korhonen addressed the recent attacks in Abqaiq and Khurais and noted that there had been no changes in security posture at the Consulate and routines were normal. Many attendees were concerned about what to do in the next emergency; the Consulate's Regional Security Officer offered to work with U.S. companies to improve their emergency response capabilities. Dhahran will hold its next Citizen Liaison Volunteer meeting on October 24th.



Consular Chief Vito DiPaola shares information at the Dhahran town hall event.



Ambassador John Abizaid addresses the American community during the Town Hall meeting on September 12

Embassy Riyadh hosted its annual American Citizen Town Hall on September 12. The event included remarks by Ambassador Abizaid, who focused broadly on the U.S. – Saudi relationship and the sweeping changes seen across the Kingdom in the past year. The Ambassador also discussed the important role that Americans play in developing social and economic ties between the two countries. Embassy officers briefed attendees on consular services and security and situational awareness.

To schedule a passport or notarial service at any of our locations or for additional information on our services, please visit [our website](#).

Hajj 2019



Consular officer Sarah Bedrouni meets with Hajj pilgrims on August 12, 2019

According to the Saudi Arabian government, roughly 2.5 million pilgrims performed Hajj this year between August 7 and 14, including nearly 21,000 U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs). A consular officer and a locally employed staff member visited the VIP Hajj camps in Mecca on August 9 and August 12. Consular employees visited with American and LPR pilgrims and verified their access to medical care, restrooms, food, and lodging.

Interested in Voting Overseas?



Most Americans residing in Saudi Arabia will be eligible to vote in the upcoming 2020 Presidential election via an absentee ballot. While absentee ballots can be mailed to the United States, many states also accept online registration and votes via email. To learn more about state-specific overseas voting guidelines, registration deadlines, and election dates, please visit www.fvap.gov. **We recommend following up with your local election office to ensure that your vote and voter registration has been received.** To learn more about the candidates and issues, please visit <https://www.fvap.gov/links>.

UPCOMING CLOSURES

The U.S. Embassy and
Consulates in Saudi
Arabia will be closed:

NOV. 10

VETERAN'S DAY

NOV. 28

THANKSGIVING

DEC. 25

CHRISTMAS DAY

JAN. 1

NEW YEAR'S DAY



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