

RED, WHITE, & BLUE *SEA SANDS SKIES*

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES NEWSLETTER

• April - June 2020 •



*U.S. EMBASSY
RIYADH*

American Citizen Services Public Hours:
Sunday - Thursday, 1:00pm-3:00pm
Email: RiyadhACS@state.gov
Phone: (966)(11)488-3800

*U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL JEDDAH*

American Citizen Services Public Hours:
Sunday - Thursday, 1:00pm-3:00pm
Email: JeddahACS@state.gov
Phone: (966)(12)220-5000

*U.S. CONSULATE
GENERAL DHAHRAN*

American Citizen Services Public Hours:
Sunday - Thursday, 1:00pm-3:30 pm
Email: DhahranACS@state.gov
Phone: (966)(13)330-3200

From the Desk of the Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs



Efforts to contain the COVID-19 virus in Saudi Arabia and in the United States have had a profound impact on all of us. As I write, on March 24, we are in the midst of the suspension of international flights that Saudi officials have announced will continue at least until March 29 and land borders are closed to passenger traffic for a temporary, but indefinite time period. Also, domestic flights and other forms of inter-urban transportation are suspended and a nationwide night-time curfew is in effect. We know these actions have created personal, professional, and financial challenges for many in the American community. The Department of State has no higher priority than the security and well-being of Americans abroad and is considering all options to assist Americans in countries where air travel has been disrupted. In Mission Saudi Arabia, we are closely monitoring the evolving situation in the Kingdom. Please be sure you are registered in STEP, follow the American Citizen Services (ACS) Saudi Arabia Twitter account, and monitor the Mission website.

At the Embassy and at Consulates General Jeddah and Dhahran, we have taken steps to reduce the density of employees in our buildings and to increase social distancing in our waiting rooms, consistent with CDC guidance and in support of Saudi efforts to contain the spread of the virus. These actions have implications for our ability to provide consular services. We have suspended all visa appointments to concentrate our limited resources on the American Citizen Services units at each post. We continue to provide passport and other ACS services, albeit at reduced levels and with longer appointment wait times than usual. If your service need is not urgent, we ask that you wait until we resume normal operations to make an appointment. Keep in mind, too, that most passport renewals can be done by mail and, if you do come in person to apply, please use our courier service for any document return you may need to help reduce density in our waiting rooms. Obviously, do not come to our waiting rooms if you are not feeling well; we will be happy to reschedule your appointment. If you have a genuine need for an expedited appointment for any ACS service, please contact the relevant ACS unit at the email address listed in this newsletter.

This edition of the newsletter provides guidance on keeping healthy during this challenging period. It highlights the new COVID-19 information page on the Embassy website that lists Saudi COVID-19 entry and exit restrictions, provides links to official sources of local news and information to help you keep abreast of this highly fluid situation, and also links to crucial CDC guidance for mitigating risk. Please rigorously adhere to this guidance and cooperate fully with Saudi public health measures.

On behalf of the employees of Mission Saudi Arabia's three consular sections, we wish you good health, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and our Saudi friends to combat the COVID-19 virus.

Sean Murphy

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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!

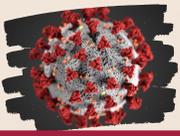


SIGN UP FOR SMS ALERTS

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



COVID-19 and Travel Restrictions

The government of Saudi Arabia has announced that as part of its efforts to contain COVID-19, all international flights, both incoming and outgoing, are suspended for a period of two weeks, beginning at 11 A.M., Sunday, March 15, 2020. Please check with your air carrier regarding their policies on rescheduling your flight. Please review COVID-19 information page on Mission Saudi Arabia's [website](#) for an updated list of current exit and entry restrictions.

During the period of flight suspension, the General Directorate of Passports (Jawazat) has issued a reminder that all visitors must continue to adhere to their terms of admission. Visitors must extend their visas before the expiration date, and they may do so by paying applicable fees and visiting any Jawazat location. The Riyadh main office for the Passport Authority is on King Fahad Branch Road and has an emergency 24 hour window available. Please contact your nearest Jawazat location for further details.

Global Health Advisory from State Department **March 19, 2020 Level 4: Do Not Travel**

The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19. In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who live in the United States should arrange for immediate return to the United States, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period. U.S. citizens who live abroad should avoid all international travel. Many countries are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and implementing travel restrictions and mandatory quarantines, closing borders, and prohibiting non-citizens from entry with little advance notice. Airlines have cancelled many international flights and several cruise operators have suspended operations or cancelled trips. If you choose to travel internationally, your travel plans may be severely disrupted, and you may be forced to remain outside of the United States for an indefinite timeframe.

On March 14, the Department of State authorized the departure of U.S. personnel and family members from any diplomatic or consular post in the world who have determined they are at higher risk of a poor outcome if exposed to COVID-19 or who have requested departure based on a commensurate justification. These departures may limit the ability of U.S. Embassies and consulates to provide services to U.S. citizens.

For the latest information regarding COVID-19, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website.

You are encouraged to visit travel.state.gov to view individual Travel Advisories for the most urgent threats to safety and security. Please also visit the website of the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate to see information on entry restrictions, foreign quarantine policies, and urgent health information provided by local governments.

Travelers are urged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. The Department uses these Alerts to convey information about terrorist threats, security incidents, planned demonstrations, natural disasters, etc. In an emergency, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate or call the following numbers: 1(888) 407-4747 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) or 1 (202) 501-4444 from other countries or jurisdictions.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORONAVIRUS GUIDELINES FOR AMERICA

15 DAYS TO SLOW THE SPREAD

Listen to and follow the directions of your **STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**.

IF YOU FEEL SICK, stay home. Do not go to work. Contact your medical provider.

IF YOUR CHILDREN ARE SICK, keep them at home. Do not send them to school. Contact your medical provider.

IF SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD HAS TESTED POSITIVE for the coronavirus, keep the entire household at home. Do not go to work. Do not go to school. Contact your medical provider.

IF YOU ARE AN OLDER PERSON, stay home and away from other people.

IF YOU ARE A PERSON WITH A SERIOUS UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITION that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from other people.



For more information, please visit
CORONAVIRUS.GOV

THE PRESIDENT'S CORONAVIRUS GUIDELINES FOR AMERICA

DO YOUR PART TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Even if you are young, or otherwise healthy, you are at risk and your activities can increase the risk for others. It is critical that you do your part to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Work or engage in schooling **FROM HOME** whenever possible.

IF YOU WORK IN A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE INDUSTRY, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule. You and your employers should follow CDC guidance to protect your health at work.

AVOID SOCIAL GATHERINGS in groups of more than 10 people.

Avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts — **USE DRIVE-THRU, PICKUP, OR DELIVERY OPTIONS.**

AVOID DISCRETIONARY TRAVEL, shopping trips, and social visits.

DO NOT VISIT nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.

PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE:

- Wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
- Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.

CORONAVIRUS.GOV

School operations can accelerate the spread of the coronavirus. Governors of states with evidence of community transmission should close schools in affected and surrounding areas. Governors should close schools in communities that are near areas of community transmission, even if those areas are in neighboring states. In addition, state and local officials should close schools where coronavirus has been identified in the population associated with the school. States and localities that close schools need to address childcare needs of critical responders, as well as the nutritional needs of children.

Older people are particularly at risk from the coronavirus. All states should follow Federal guidance and halt social visits to nursing homes and retirement and long-term care facilities.

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.

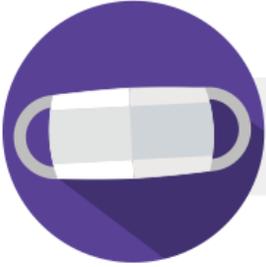


Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

■ Do you have COVID-19 symptoms?



Wear a mask

Call 937 **#937**



**You will be directed
to the nearest hospital**

Please note the 937 menu is in Arabic only. When you hear the menu, press #5 to reach an English-speaking attendant. Be prepared to wait - don't hang up as the Arabic call waiting message plays.

MOH initiative



RIYADH ROUND UP

NATIONAL DAY AND 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. - SAUDI PARTNERSHIP



Ambassador Abizaid and guest view the photo display

On February 14, 2020, the U.S. Embassy celebrated its National Day Event in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the meeting between U.S. President Roosevelt and Saudi King Abdulaziz, which took place on the same day in 1945. The event showcased a photo gallery highlighting the strong partnership between the two countries. The Riyadh Governor attended as the guest of honor and the U.S. Air Forces Central Command Band performed at the event.

VISIT FROM SECRETARY POMPEO

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Riyadh February 19-21, 2020. He met with Saudi leaders to discuss security issues in addition to Saudi women leaders and activists. Secretary Pompeo also visited our Saudi partners and U.S. troops deployed to Prince Sultan Air Base.





ACS chief Alden Greene presents at a town hall in Al Hasa, February 13.

Consulate General Dhahran hosted a meeting of its Citizen Liaison Volunteers on January 29 with a focus on crisis management. One of the key components of a crisis management plan is preparedness; after evaluation of their own preparedness, participants discussed topics such as how to operate a satellite phone and to how to respond to a health crisis. In recent months, CG Dhahran also held town halls for American employees of two companies: Vinnell Arabia in Al Hasa and Aramco in Ras Tanura. Topics ranged from filing immigrant visas for spouses, how to vote overseas, and questions about passport renewals in addition to a general discussion of COVID-19 and the Consulate's response.

Happenings in Jeddah

In February and March, the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit at the Consulate General in Jeddah conducted a customer service survey to assess the quality of their services and collect information on how they might improve their customers' experiences. The feedback that ACS received showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents were happy with their experience, marking it as "Excellent" (75%) or "Good" (19%). The survey also provided valuable feedback on how to improve operations, including suggestions for waiting room entertainment and additional parking. In response, the consular section has installed televisions in the waiting rooms and has worked with the city of Jeddah to arrange for installation of sidewalks around the consulate and identify additional parking areas along the median on Alsafa Street. Jeddah's ACS team continues to experiment with additional ways to improve their processes and provide exceptional services to American citizens in their district.



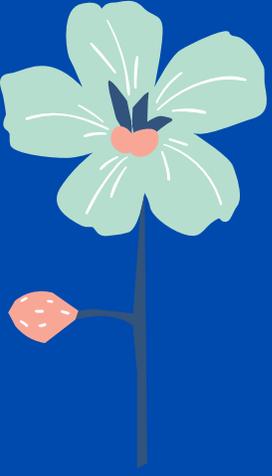


Celebrating Ramadan

The beginning and end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, are based on actual sightings of the new moon, likely from about April 23 to May 23, 2020. The official start and end of the month will be announced by newspaper, television, and radio.

Ramadan is a time of abstinence from food, drink (including water), and physical pleasure (including smoking) during daylight hours. Expectations of conservative public behavior and dress are heightened during Ramadan. The fast is generally held to be obligatory for Muslims, unless they are old, very young, infirm, traveling, or pregnant. Fasting is observed between dawn and sunset (roughly 4:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.).

Non-Muslims are not expected to fast, but it is against Saudi law for anyone to eat, drink, or smoke in public between sunrise and sunset. Even children should be instructed not to eat or drink in public, which includes while in a vehicle that is on or visible from the street. Eating, drinking or smoking in public are grounds for arrest.



Ramadan

RECIPES

Click on the picture for the recipe!

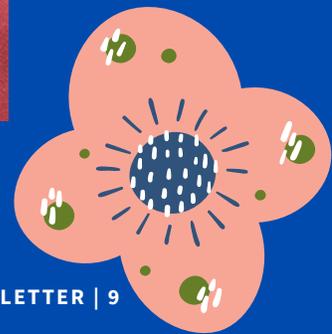
Konafah



Balila



Luqaimat



How to Vote From Anywhere

WHEN YOU'RE AN AMERICAN OVERSEAS



STEP

1

REGISTER
AND REQUEST
YOUR ABSENTEE
BALLOT WITH THE
FEDERAL POST
CARD APPLICATION
(FPCA).

STEP

2

FILL OUT AND
SEND IN
YOUR BALLOT
WHEN IT
ARRIVES.

Common Questions About Absentee Voting

Q: Do all states have the same election rules and deadlines for military and overseas voters?

A: States have different steps in regard to how and when voting forms are returned. Head to FVAP.gov to find state-specific guidelines.

Q: Can I vote in person at a local embassy/consulate or on a military installation?

A: No, embassies and consulates are not polling places, but they can help you fill out forms and send your ballot to your election office.

Q: How are absentee ballots kept confidential?

A: State absentee ballots and the FWAB are designed with a "Secrecy Envelope" allowing for the separation of the voter's identity from the cast ballot. Voting Assistance Officers also ensure voters casting absentee ballots on Department of Defense facilities are able to do so in a private and independent manner. Local election officials are professionals who go to great lengths in their ballot handling procedures to ensure your vote, and personal information, are kept private.

What's in the ACS Mailbox?



Q: Do you take tax returns? Do you have tax forms?

A: We do not accept tax returns; please contact the IRS directly on how to submit your tax returns. Lists of tax specialists have been collected by our Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulates General in Jeddah and Dhahran and are listed under our [local resources section](#). Tax forms are available at IRS.gov.

Q: I am an American citizen working in Riyadh. I have a business visa. My employer is treating me poorly and recently stopped paying me. Can the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit help me leave the country?

A: Americans have run into serious legal problems with Saudi Immigration because they take up employment on a visa annotated “not permitted to work,” or overstay their visas based on promises from their employer. If you become involved in a labor dispute, the Embassy cannot provide legal assistance with your case or provide translation services. Lists of English-speaking lawyers are available [on our website](#). You may also file a claim with the Saudi Labor office, but keep in mind that if you are working illegally in the country, your options are limited. Americans working in Saudi Arabia should be legally resident and hold the appropriate residence permit (iqama).

Q: I want to vote; what are the drop-off hours for my ballot?

A: For Riyadh: The ballot box is located in the front Embassy entrance; you may drop off ballots from 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday-Thursday.

For Dhahran: The ballot box is located at the pedestrian access gate; you may drop off ballots from 8 am - 4 pm, Sunday-Thursday.

For Jeddah: The ballot box is located on Alsafa St. at the consular entrance; you may drop off ballots from 1 pm - 3 pm, Sunday-Thursday.

Q: Can you give me my Social Security number? I lost my card.

A: We cannot provide your Social Security number. If you reside in Saudi Arabia and have questions regarding services provided by the Social Security Administration (SSA), you must contact the SSA Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) located at Embassy Rome. For more information on their services and how to contact them, please visit their [webpage](#).

Tax Day now July 15

If you need assistance,
please contact [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) or
please see the lists of tax
specialists collected [here](#).



UNPAID TAXES MAY RESULT IN REVOCATION OR DENIAL OF A PASSPORT



If you have seriously delinquent tax debt, IRC § 7345 authorizes the IRS to certify that debt to the State Department for action. The State Department generally will not issue a passport to you after receiving certification from the IRS.

Upon receiving certification, the State Department will deny your passport application and/or may revoke your current passport. If your passport application is denied or your passport revoked and you are overseas, the State Department may issue you a limited validity passport good only for direct return to the United States.

You can find more information on the Internal Revenue Service's website.

SCAM ALERT: SOCIAL SECURITY PHONE SCAM

The Social Security Administration launched a new Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign to warn people about an ongoing nationwide telephone impersonation scheme. The PSAs feature a message from Social Security Commissioner Andrew Saul warning citizens about people falsely claiming to be Social Security employees. The scammers mislead victims into making cash or gift card payments for help with purported identity theft, or to avoid arrest for bogus Social Security number problems. Fraudsters also email fake documents in attempts to get people to comply with their demands. Victims have received emails with attached letters and reports that appear to be from Social Security or the Office of the Inspector General.

Social Security will not:

- tell you that your Social Security number is suspended;
- contact you to demand immediate payment or ask for credit or debit card numbers;
- require specific means of debt repayment, like a prepaid debit card, gift card, or cash;
- demand that you pay a debt without the ability to appeal; or
- promise a Social Security benefit in exchange for information or money.

SAFETY & SECURITY



UPDATED TRAVEL ADVISORY

The U.S. Department of State updated its Global Travel Advisory on March 19, 2020, to provide additional information about the global impact of COVID-19. It can be found at:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/travel-advisory-alert-global-level-4-health-advisory-issue.html>



FOLLOW TRAVELGOV ON INSTAGRAM

for travel tips, resources, and a peek into the lives of our diplomats abroad.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS INSTAGRAM

Follow @travelgov on Instagram for travel tips and safety resources to help you make informed decisions regarding travel, and enjoy photos of amazing locations around the world:

[@travelgov](https://www.instagram.com/travelgov)

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

In addition to the STEP messages we send via email, we post safety and security information on Twitter, as well as helpful information for U.S. citizens living in Saudi Arabia. To stay up-to-date on the latest ACS news, follow us:

[@KSA_ACS](https://twitter.com/KSA_ACS)

**FOLLOW
US!**

ACS APPOINTMENTS

U.S. passport and notarial services are available by appointment only and generally offered from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Please see our website for information about these services, as well as how to schedule your appointment online:

<https://sa.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/citizenship-services/>

Was your child born in Saudi Arabia and needs their first US. passport? Please see detailed information on our website about applying for a U.S. Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) and how to make an appointment with us:

<https://sa.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/child-family-matters/birth/>

UPCOMING CLOSURES

MAY 24
MEMORIAL DAY

MAY 25-28*
RAMADAN / EID AL FITR

For a full list of Embassy/Consulate closures, see our website:

<https://sa.usembassy.gov/holiday-calendar/>

*Exact dates subject to change

Do you know your passport's expiration date?

Check your passport now - some countries require at least 6 months validity in order to enter!



For information on how to renew your U.S. passport in Saudi Arabia, see our website:

<https://sa.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/passports/>

Visit travel.state.gov to see passport validity requirements for other countries.