

EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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Photo courtesy of travel.state.gov

New Alert System

The Department of State has decided to change the way it warns travelers of security issues. Under the new system, each country will have a Travel Advisory listed on travel.state.gov. Kosovo's will be [here](#). Instead of a myriad of different threats, the system will have four levels. The higher the level, the more dangerous it is to travel to a country. For example, Level One means "exercise normal caution," while Level Four means "we believe you should not travel here." Just like movie ratings, the levels will also have designators telling you the kinds of danger the country has. For example, a "C" indicates crime problems and a "H" indicates health related problems such as disease outbreaks or crises that disrupt normal medical care. Besides Travel Advisories, individual embassies can issue Travel Alerts. Travel Alerts tell of immediate or short term security or weather related problems. They can be about a massive winter storm on the way or a demonstration that will happen in the afternoon. Between Travel Advisories and Travel Alerts, we at Embassy Pristina take our responsibility to keep Americans safe as our top priority.

Additional articles you may want to read regarding the changes:

[Consular Warning Changes](#)

[New Travel Advisories](#)

[Advisory Levels Explained](#)

[Travel Advisory Change](#)

Words To Work By - Inspire

The Bureau of Consular Affairs is unique in the Department of State. We are the bureau almost everyone interacts with, both American and not. We make passports; we help out our citizens overseas; and we interview visa applicants and either approve or deny their applications. It's a large responsibility, and to guide us in that responsibility, Consular Affairs has developed Leadership and Management Tenets. The first one is Inspire.

Our managers inspire us with the vision of doing right and doing well in our jobs. We, as employees, need to inspire our customers to expect fairness and consistency from us and to follow their dreams, whether in visiting the US or other countries, pursuing love through fiancé visas, or pursuing education through student visas.

In part, this means we try to inspire trust in the process. We want you to have faith that we are following the law of the United States. When you apply for a passport or other service, we will treat you fairly and according to law. We model the rule of law to our customers; sometimes, this is the most important part of our job. As exemplars of due process and rule of law, we are teaching others its meaning. By treating everyone fairly, without regard to privilege or position, we are exemplifying a model of governance for others to see and possibly follow.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, Kosovo, strives to provide the highest level of customer service to its clients, regardless of nationality, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. If you'd like to provide feedback on your experience at the Embassy, please write to us- we'd love to hear from you! Our contact information is below.



United States Embassy Pristina, Kosovo American Citizen Services
Contact us if you have any questions at PristinaACS@state.gov.
Nazim Hikmet 30, 10000 Pristina, Kosovo
Phone: +381 38 59 59 3001

Snowstorms – It's COLD Outside

Kosovo is known for snowstorms. Oft times, it is nearly impossible to reach villages in the winter. After heavy snowfall, electricity can fail for days. Cold is COLD! Be prepared. You may have to shelter in place until the temperatures warm up or the roads are cleared enough to be safe to drive on.

For your home, a generator is a good idea. This keeps the heating system up and running for the duration of an electrical outage if you have fuel to run it. Generators need to be installed well before they are needed and hardwired into the home's electrical system. Some places, like the International Village, have a generator system installed for the whole community.

Clean your chimney and stockpile a generous supply of firewood. Chimney fires are common in the winter due to the buildup of soot in the flue. [Observe fire safety rules](#) when using your fireplace, and keep children well away.

Stock up on food, water, and other supplies. Remember that you will not be able to use your stove, oven, or microwave. Ensure you have blankets and winter gear for the weather. If the electricity goes out, you will need to use these indoors. To preserve the food in the refrigerator and freezer when the electricity goes out, put frozen food outdoors in snow and refrigerated foods in the garage. They will stay cold longer there than in a nonworking cooler.

If you drive, make sure you have food, water, blankets, and winter performance gear in your car. The government of Kosovo requires all cars to have winter tires installed and snow chains for the drive axle tires from November 15 to March 15, and police are allowed to stop cars to tell the drivers to put the chains on. If you are unsure you have winter tires on your car, look on the tire's side. If it has a snowflake on it, it's a winter tire. You can find the list of Kosovar winter driving regulations [here](#).

Charge up your cell phones and other electronic devices before the storm hits. Your cell phone will be your primary means of communication during the storm.

For other tips, follow the links below.

[Ready.gov's winter storm prep guide](#)

[Advice from Lifehacker](#)

[Red Cross's Guide To Winter Storm Prep](#)

[Real Life To Do List for Winter Storms](#)



Photo courtesy of ready.gov

NOTICE REGARDING SOCIAL SECURITY SERVICES

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has consolidated its overseas operations into several regional offices that provide a full range of SSA services for U.S. citizens residing outside of the United States.

Effective October 1, 2017, individuals residing in Kosovo who require social security services or have questions about SSA benefits must contact the SSA Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) located in Athens, Greece, rather than U.S. Embassy Pristina.

Please be advised that as of October 1, U.S. Embassy Pristina can no longer accept telephone calls, emails, or walk-in consultations regarding Social Security issues.

For more information or any questions about the services provided at the FBU in Athens, Greece and how to contact them, please visit their webpage at: <https://gr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/social-security/>.

You can also reach them at (phone number) +30 210-720-2426, between 8:30 and 12:00 Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays or via email at FBU.Athens@ssa.gov.

Notarial vs Apostille

At the embassy, you can receive notarial services. Sometimes, though, those services are not what you need. If you are handing a document over to a non-US entity, that entity may ask for an apostille instead. In that case, the embassy cannot help you. What is the difference, and why is an apostille so much harder to get?

Notarial services are more familiar to American citizens. Here in Kosovo, the U.S. Embassy offers notarial services by its consular officers. A notary verifies your identity, watches you sign your document, and then signs and seals the document after you. The notary may also make a copy of a document for you and then verify that the copy is identical to the original. Notaries in the US are appointed by each state. In other countries, notaries are appointed by various methods. For US documents used within the US, notarization is accepted.

An apostille is another layer of security. It says to a foreign government that the notary who signed the form is legitimately a notary. A notary cannot vouch for him- or herself. The notary must be verified by the authorizing authority, which, in the case of the US, is the Secretary of State of the state the document and notary are from. If you have a car title from Texas and need to show that title to a foreign government, you must get an apostille. The way to get that apostille is to send that document to the Secretary of State of the State of Texas' office. The Secretary of State of Texas will verify that the document is from Texas and, if notarized, that the notary has the right to practice in Texas; the office then adds an apostille stamp. [Here is a list of Secretary of State offices for each state.](#)

As the US Department of State does not authorize notaries anywhere but outside the United States, the Department is not an authorizing authority. Without this authority, the Department cannot apostille documents.

Many governments have agreed to this method in the Hague Convention of 1961. Almost all countries of the world are signatories. For those that are not, the process is more arduous. Apostilles allow different countries to be confident that the documents they are accepting are legitimate. If you would like to know more about apostilles, the [Hague Convention website](#) has more information.

If you believe you may need to show a document to a foreign government, we recommend you get it apostilled while in the United States. It is a lot easier to do there than from here.

To obtain an authentication of a Kosovo document, please contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for Consular Affairs or the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Civil Registration Agency accordingly. For contact information please [click here](#).

The U.S. Embassy will be closed on these dates:

January 15, 2018—Martin Luther King Day

February 19, 2018—Washington's Birthday/
Kosovo Independence Day

April 2, 2018—Easter Monday

April 9, 2018—Orthodox Easter Monday