

EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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American Business in Kosovo—Burger King

Burger King (BK) is the third major American food chain to open in Kosovo. The first store opened this past spring, and there are now eight stores in Kosovo and two in Albania; these countries are a single subdivision in the Burger King corporation. It took two years of lobbying corporate headquarters to get the green light for the stores. BK is an American Chamber of Commerce member and stays out of politics. More than 250 people are employed in the two countries, receiving good wages and health insurance.



Photo courtesy of Burger King Albania

Sales have been better than projections, including sales of the Rebel burger, BK's version of the plant based burger that tastes and feels like meat. Originally it was thought that Rebel burgers would represent 20% of sales.

The actual figure is between 30 and 35%, with people asking for double Rebel whoppers and other sandwiches to be made with it. The chief executive officer, Shkumbin Mucolli, credits BK's emphasis on great taste, food safety, and quality ingredients, all of which are imported from western Europe, for its success. Burger King has open kitchens so people can see how clean they are, and even offer tours upon request.

While Burger King's burgers taste different from local burgers, the company has not found this an impediment to sales. The chain also believes it gives a small taste of America to its customers in Kosovo. Customers are enjoying the taste of beef without the mix of spices common to other qebabs here. With competitive prices despite all the importation, BK relies on a low margin and high volume to turn a profit. BK is working with local suppliers to get

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

- February 17th - Presidents' Day (US) and Independence Day (Kosovo)
- April 9th - Constitution Day (Kosovo)
- April 13th - Easter Holiday (Kosovo)
- April 20th - Orthodox Easter Holiday (Kosovo)



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Photo courtesy of Burger King Albania

their standards and consistency of product to the point BK needs them to be.

Kosovo was the fastest growing division of BK this year, opening ten stores in less than a year. In 2020, BK expects to open eight more stores in Albania and two more in Kosovo. Burger King follows all local laws and is trying to spread food safety as a culture through its employees and procedures. Visit Burger King for a small taste of America in the heart of Kosovo.

Applying For Permanent Residency In Kosovo

We have updated our information about applying for permanent residency in Kosovo! The new information is meant as a guide to get you started, not as legal advice. To check out our new page, look [here](#). To more easily navigate the [Ministry of Internal Affairs page](#) our page links to, click on English in the upper right corner. Information regarding residency permits is found under "[Application for Permit Stay for Foreigners](#)." The government department in charge of residency permits is the [Department of Citizenship, Asylum, and Migration \(DCAM\)](#).



Road Sign of the Quarter



- This sign means ...
- a. falling rocks ahead
 - b. objects get bigger as they fall
 - c. sides are steep
 - d. sweep me away

Answer: a. falling rocks ahead

Unseen Kosovo – Restelica

In February of 2012, early in the morning, the unthinkable happened. A giant wall of snow fell from the top of a mountain and onto several houses in Restelica. The houses were buried under ten meters of snow. Within minutes, the local authorities in Dragash were notified and were on their way; they arrived within an hour.

When emergency services arrived, they found eighteen houses flattened by the snow; their walls had collapsed under the weight of the avalanche. They did not know if anyone survived or even if some of the houses were occupied. By talking to neighbors, they learned most of the houses were empty. Rescue efforts were concentrated on the homes believe to be occupied at the time of the avalanche.



Photo courtesy of Bashkim Zeneli—current view of avalanche site



Two cranes and diggers made it up the steep slopes to the scene. One more could not fit in the confined area. Constant digging by rescuers eventually resulted in some good news: a five year old girl was rescued from a small pocket of one collapsed house. Two walls had fallen over the child and her mother in a way that did not harm them. Her mother died of exposure as she worked to keep her daughter warm.

The total toll was eighteen destroyed homes and ten dead, all from the same extended family, in two of those houses. The avalanche came from an unexpected angle in an area that had not had an avalanche in decades; there was no barrier of stone or trees to break the momentum.

Photo courtesy of Tafil Krasniqi

Some of the homes have since been rebuilt. A Swiss non-governmental organization helped the townsfolk plant chestnut trees as a snow brake, but the trees are still too young to provide any protection. A few homes now have two meter tall brick walls between them and the mountain to curb the effect of an avalanche on them, but the efficacy of this measure is uncertain.



Photo courtesy of Tarif Krasniqi

CMSE - Embassy Section of the Quarter

The Civil Military Support Element, or CMSE, is a team of four US Army servicemembers liaising between the Department of Defense, Department of State, and USAID within Kosovo. CMSE projects vary from country to country, but in Kosovo the CMSE coordinates directly between the US Embassy, local government institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Over the past few years, the CMSE has helped develop the Kosovo Security Forces (KSF) Civil Affairs (CA) Company. Often the CMSE and KSF CA Company members have attended the same training together at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. These bonds formed during training have helped build a relationship and fraternity that crosses the globe.

In November, these bonds were tested during the response to the earthquake in Albania. With training in coordination of humanitarian aid, the KSF CA Company, KSF Search and Rescue, and CMSE responded immediately to requests for assistance. While the KSF Search and Rescue personnel were providing both the technical assistance and tools to extract survivors, the KSF CA Company and CMSE were ensuring the international community's aid was being distributed effectively. The KSF CA Company and CMSE immediately identified the need for an Operations Center to coordinate distribution of aid between the Albanian government's resources and international aid. This operations center helped ensure not only more effective distribution of aid, but also a focus on security for resources. While the KSF CA Company is a relatively new unit, the selection criteria and training has made them an essential partner in the Balkan region.



The U.S. Embassy's Civil Military Support Element (CMSE) was recognized for their contributions by the KSF Civil Affairs team at a recent reception. KSF Civil Affairs honored CMSE for their support in responding to the needs of Albanians after the recent earthquake. KSF noted that their ability to assist Albania was helped greatly by all the training and coordination they have had with the U.S. over the last year. KSF also said farewell to the current CMSE team and welcomed the recently arrived team. Photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy Pristina.

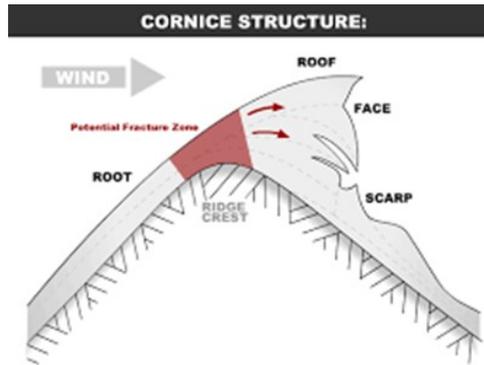


The lower three photos are of CMSE in action during the Albanian earthquake response.

Avalanche Preparedness

The best way to prepare for an avalanche is to avoid avalanche-prone areas during the winter season. While Kosovo does not have an avalanche forecast center, there is one for other parts of Europe. You can access their forecasts at avalanches.org, European Avalanche Warning Services. As there is no warning service, you need to be aware of your surroundings as you explore the great outdoors during winter. Here are some signs an avalanche may be imminent:

1. The angle of the slope is at least 30 degrees. Most avalanches happen on slopes that are between 30 and 50 degrees in elevation.
2. There has been a dramatic change of large snowstorm or sudden rain cloudiness. Any of these may
3. Look for crystals, or hoarfrost, on again on top of the crystals, likely to slip off it.
4. Spot the cornices. Cornices are that were formed by wind. Any eventually fall.
5. Pay attention to nearby avalanche activity. If there have been avalanches nearby, especially on slopes facing the same way, there is an increased likelihood that an avalanche could happen on the slope you are on.
6. Look for rocky outcrops on the slopes. These outcrops accumulate ice more quickly than other areas of slopes. They are difficult to see under a layer of snow, and, because of their configuration, may also have cornices involved.
7. Avoid unsupported slopes. Unsupported slopes do not have a backstop, such as a rock formation, a wall, or a large stand of trees at the bottom. Because there is nothing to stop the snow, it falls off the slope easily.
8. Cracks in the snow. These are a sign the snow is getting ready to fall and is separating.



weather. There may have been a or a lot of sun after a period of result in unstable snow. top of the snow. If it snows which are slick ice, the snow is

the bits of overhanging snow overhanging bit of snow will

avalanche activity. If there have

If you see these signs, you are in an area of increased avalanche risk. If it feels like the snow is settling when you walk on it, or like it is releasing a lot of air (characterized as a “whumpf” sound), remain alert for possible avalanches. Avalanches are triggered easily by noise, shifting through wind or other forces, and temperature changes. To minimize the risk in avalanche prone areas, stay in valleys away from avalanche chutes, in stands of trees, or on gentle slopes.

When skiing or hiking in avalanche prone areas, you should always carry an avalanche beacon, a shovel, and a probe. Wear a helmet. Get trained in first aid and how to treat hypothermia. And be alert.

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN AN AVALANCHE THREATENS



Learn about your local avalanche risk.

Sign up for alerts from a U.S. Forest Service Avalanche Center near you. Your community may also have a local warning system.

Learn the signs of an avalanche and how to use safety and rescue equipment.

Take first aid training to recognize and treat suffocation, hypothermia, traumatic injury, and shock.

Travel with a guide who knows the locations to avoid. Always travel in pairs.

Follow avalanche warnings on roads. Roads may be closed or vehicles may be advised not to stop on the roadside.

Know the signs of increased danger, including recent avalanches and shooting cracks across slopes.

Avoid areas of increased risk like slopes steeper than 30 degrees or areas downhill of steep slopes.



Wear a helmet to help reduce head injuries and an **avalanche beacon** to help others locate you.

Use an avalanche airbag that may create air pockets to give you more space to breathe and help you from being completely buried.

Carry a collapsible avalanche probe and a small shovel to help rescue others.

If your partner or others are buried, call 9-1-1 and then begin to search.

Treat others for suffocation, hypothermia, traumatic injury, or shock.



Know the signs and ways to treat hypothermia.

Hypothermia is an unusually low body temperature. A body temperature below 95 degrees is an emergency.

- **Signs:** Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness.
- **Actions:** Go to a warm room or shelter. Warm the center of the body first—chest, neck, head, and groin. Keep the person dry and wrapped up in warm blankets, including the head and neck.

Take an Active Role in Your Safety

Go to [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) and search for avalanche. Download the FEMA app to get more information about preparing for an avalanche. To learn of current avalanche conditions in your area visit www.avalanche.org.

