

May 2021

Consular Newsletter



Dear Readers –

My name is Jozanne Maloney, and I'm the Fraud Prevention Manager at the U.S. Embassy in Port au Prince. Our mission in the Fraud Prevention Unit is to prevent and investigate all types of consular fraud in order to strengthen U.S. border security, facilitate legitimate travel to the United States, and protect the lives of U.S. citizens.



*Pictured: Jozanne Maloney,
Chief, Fraud Prevention Unit*

We take fraud seriously. My team and I work with many others to identify and deter persons attempting to travel to the U.S. by fraudulent means. We also work tirelessly to ensure that applicants are not vulnerable to scams perpetrated by individuals falsely claiming to offer passport and visa services, or otherwise misrepresent the U.S. government. If we find that an applicant or U.S. citizen has committed fraud, not only will they lose the benefit that they are seeking, but they may also have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines, or even go to jail. If necessary, we refer individuals for prosecution under U.S. or Haitian law.

Fraud prevention is particularly important as we continue to make strides towards re-opening consular services. We are conducting student and exchange visitor nonimmigrant visa interviews, and we are accepting [Interview Waiver/Visa Renewal](#) applications on a limited basis. The Immigrant Visa unit continues to schedule a limited number of interviews for all categories of immigrant visas, prioritizing certain documentarily qualified cases. The

American Citizen Services unit is currently providing all normal services, such as Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, passport renewals, and notarial services.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to require unprecedented actions to protect both U.S. and Haitian citizens. The U.S. Embassy must continue to limit the number of consular appointments each day in order to protect our staff and our clients. As things evolve, we will

continue to update applicants via our website and social media, and you can always find the most current status of services on the [Embassy's website](#).

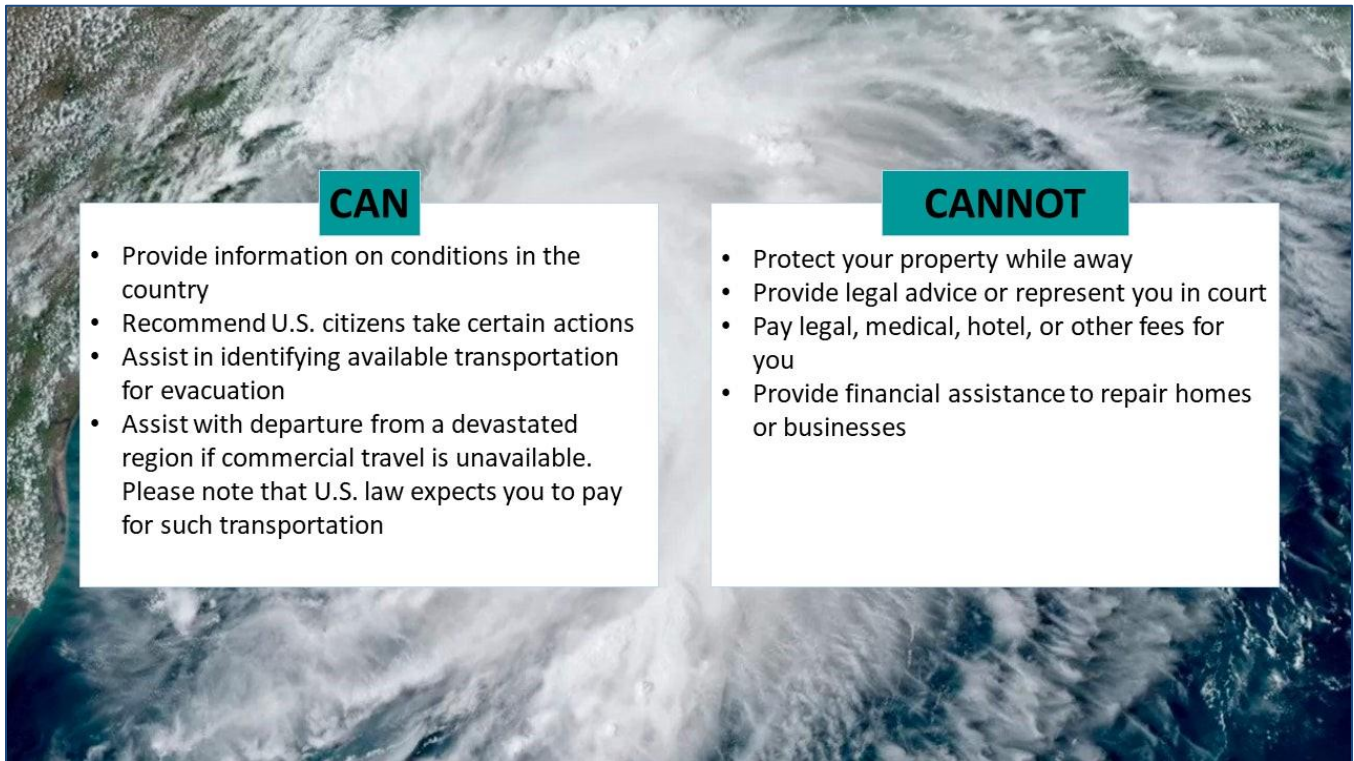
Additionally, to travel to the United States, fully vaccinated individuals still need to show a negative test result (rapid antigen or PCR) [taken no more than three days](#) before boarding a flight to the United States. The Government of Haiti also requires negative COVID-19 tests from all passengers prior to boarding flights coming to Haiti. We will continue to update COVID-19 information for the United States and Haiti on the [Embassy's COVID-19 webpage](#), where you can find useful links to the CDC and other resources.

Please remember that the U.S. Department of State's travel advisory for Haiti remains at its highest level, which is "Level 4: Do Not Travel" due to ongoing kidnapping, crime, and civil unrest. Please review the State Department's [travel advisory](#) and sign up for our [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) if you are planning travel to Haiti, especially during the upcoming hurricane season (June 1 to November 30).

Hurricane Preparedness

Hurricane season begins June 1 and runs through November 30, but the time to prepare is now. At the end of this month, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center will publish its forecast for the 2021 hurricane season. Haiti is a storm-prone region. You should carefully consider the potential dangers and inconveniences of traveling to storm-prone regions of the world. If you go, make an emergency plan beforehand. Even inland areas far from the coastline can experience destructive winds, tornadoes, mudslides, and floods from storms. Prepare for hurricanes and tropical storms now by organizing a kit in a waterproof container that includes a supply of bottled water, non-perishable food items, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, any medications taken regularly, and vital documents (especially your passport and other identification).

Here's what the U.S. Embassy can – and cannot – do for U.S. citizens in a crisis:



CAN

- Provide information on conditions in the country
- Recommend U.S. citizens take certain actions
- Assist in identifying available transportation for evacuation
- Assist with departure from a devastated region if commercial travel is unavailable. Please note that U.S. law expects you to pay for such transportation

CANNOT

- Protect your property while away
- Provide legal advice or represent you in court
- Pay legal, medical, hotel, or other fees for you
- Provide financial assistance to repair homes or businesses

[NOAA](#) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) have additional tips on their websites. While traveling during storm season, stay aware of developments by monitoring local media and the [National Hurricane Center](#) for news and weather reports. Minor storms can quickly become hurricanes, limiting the time to get out. If a weather emergency occurs, stay in touch with your tour operator, hotel staff, and local authorities for evacuation instructions. Finally, be sure you are enrolled in our [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP).

Be Prepared!

Make sure your U.S. passport is valid. You should also ensure your children's passports are valid. Make an appointment now [on our website](#).

Ask the Consul: Fraud Prevention

Each month we'll be answering some of your frequently asked questions. For May, we're focusing on how to protect yourself from fraud and scams.

Q: A "visa consultant" has offered to help me improve my chances of getting a U.S. visa – what should I do?

A: First, remember that only consular officers make decisions on visa applications. No one can guarantee the issuance of a visa to you, as eligibility is determined by a consular officer only. Beware of individuals or businesses who say they can obtain a visa or passport for you, whether they are charging you money or offering the advice as a friend. Racketeers who say that they can help you get a visa may actually hurt your chances of getting a visa ([watch a video about avoiding racketeers here, featuring Tonton Bicha](#)). The U.S. Embassy does not work with consultants, and they cannot improve your chances of getting a visa. Many visa applicants lose money or are permanently barred from the U.S. after committing fraud on the advice of so-called "visa consultants." Applicants are responsible for the information they provide on any application forms or documents they provide at the interview, even if someone else prepared the application on their behalf. Remember that all U.S. government forms are free, and the fees that you should expect to pay for various visa categories can be found on the [U.S. Embassy's visa website here](#).



Q: What can I do to be sure that my appointment at the Embassy goes smoothly, and that I'm not accused of committing fraud?

A: Don't take shortcuts. Come to your interview prepared with your complete application and genuine original documents. You may obtain birth extracts, marriage extracts, divorce extracts, and death certificates from SogeExpress and Unitransfer in Haiti. Be careful of people in the U.S. and Haiti who promise to obtain documents quickly and from different locations. The U.S. Embassy does not accept fraudulent documents for any purpose, and we work with the Haitian National Police and the National Archives to detect fraudulent documents. Presenting fraudulent documents could result in a permanent ineligibility. Please read the [instructions on our website carefully](#) and ensure that you have completed all forms correctly and have all the documents required. Remember only to trust information from official U.S. Embassy sources, such as the [Embassy website](#) and the [Embassy's visa website](#). Information obtained via non-official sources may be inaccurate.

Q: What should I do if I am aware of fraud associated with a U.S. passport or visa application, or if I'm a victim of fraud myself?

A: If you are aware of fraud associated with a U.S. passport or visa application, or you yourself were a victim of U.S. passport or visa fraud, please report the problem to papfraud@state.gov. When reporting fraud, be sure to include as much information as you have about the application in question (if there is one); that will help us

For more information about fraud prevention, go to:

- [State Department Fraud Tips](#)
- Email: papfraud@state.gov
- [Avoid Racketeers Video](#)

ensure that the report is thoroughly assessed. If you have information that will help us protect the integrity of the visa and citizenship process, please let us know. Your information would be considered anonymous and treated as strictly confidential.

The Bottom Line: Keep in mind that the purpose of the interview is simply to determine whether you meet the requirements for a visa or citizenship document. Remain calm, listen to the questions carefully, and answer all questions honestly.

Celebrating Haitian Heritage Month & Haitian Flag Day



Haitian Flag Day is May 18: May is Haitian Heritage Month: Haitian Heritage Month is an internationally recognized celebration and an opportunity to celebrate the rich culture, distinctive art, and delicious food, and learn the traditions of Haiti and its people. The month-long celebration is an expansion of Haitian Flag Day on May 18th, a major patriotic day in Haiti and among the diaspora.

Haiti's current flag is a bicolor, horizontal flag of blue and red, with a white panel bearing the coat of arms. The coat of arms depicts a trophy of weapons atop a green hill and a royal palm symbolizing independence. The palm is topped by the "Cap of Liberty" and the motto "L'Union fait la Force" (*"unity makes strength"*) appears on a white ribbon below the arrangement. This current flag that we see today has a long and rich history. It is said to be created by revolutionary Jean-Jacques Dessalines in 1803. The picture to the right shows the evolution of the flag from its creation to the current version introduced in 1986.



Health Resources & COVID-19

- 👉 **COVID-19:** For updated information about COVID-19 in Haiti, including where to get tested, entry/exit requirements, and quarantine information, [please visit the Embassy website](#).
- 👉 Make sure you are current on your vaccines, including tetanus and rabies. Treatment for prevention of rabies after you have been potentially exposed is non-existent in Haiti.
- 👉 Know where doctors and the closest emergency room are in your area. Please visit the [Embassy website](#) for a list of hospitals and medical professionals in Haiti.
- 👉 Always keep basic medications and supplies on hand. Invest in a quality first aid kit and keep one in your car and at home.
- 👉 Always have medical insurance, including medevac insurance. If you need to be medically evacuated out of Haiti, you should contact a medevac company or an air ambulance service. Visit the U.S. Embassy website for a list of [Air Ambulance Services](#).

3 Haiti – Level 3:
High Level of COVID-19

The CDC has issued a Level 3 health advisory for Haiti. Travelers should reconsider travel to Haiti. Travel may increase chances of getting and spreading COVID-19.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

Travel & Security

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Haiti – Level 4: Do Not Travel

The U.S. Department of State has renewed the highest level “[Level 4: Do Not Travel](#)” travel advisory for Haiti due to kidnapping, crime, and civil unrest.

If you are in Haiti...

- Remember that demonstrations, tire burning, and roadblocks are frequent, unpredictable, and can turn violent at any time. Emergency response, including ambulance service, is limited or non-existent.
- Always carry your cell phone and ensure it is charged before you travel. Ensure you have important numbers programmed into your phone. Consider using code names for family or friends.
- Avoid demonstrations and crowds. If you encounter a roadblock, turn around and get to a safe area.
- Arrange airport transfers and hotels in advance, or have your host meet you upon arrival.
- Travel by vehicle to minimize walking in public, and travel in groups of at least two people, whenever possible.
- Always keep vehicle doors and windows locked, with valuables out of sight.
- Exercise caution and alertness, especially when driving through markets and other traffic-congested areas.
- Do not physically resist any robbery attempt/kidnapping.
- Do not travel in areas unfamiliar to you and be aware that navigation apps are highly unreliable in Haiti.
- Always make sure your vehicle is in good driving condition.
- Travel at times when traffic is expected to be lighter and avoid travel after dark in Port au Prince.
- Ensure adequate spacing between vehicles to provide options for evading a potentially dangerous situation.
- Patronize shops or restaurants that provide secure, enclosed, and well-lit parking.
- Always inform someone, such as a family member or friend, of where you are going and what time you expect to return. Minimize broadly publishing your travel plans on social media.
- **Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** to receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in Haiti, and help the Embassy contact you in the case of emergency. To enroll, visit: step.state.gov, or click the image below.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Embassy Address:

U.S. Embassy Port au Prince
Boulevard du 15 Octobre
Tabarre 41, Route de Tabarre, Port au Prince, Haiti

Online Resources:

- ✓ U.S. Embassy Port au Prince's website: ht.usembassy.gov
- ✓ American Citizen Services (ACS) website: ht.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services
- ✓ U.S. Embassy Port au Prince on Facebook: facebook.com/USEmbassyHaiti
- ✓ ACS on Facebook: facebook.com/ACSPortauPrince
- ✓ Haiti Travel Advisory: travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/haiti-travel-advisory.html

To respond to your inquiry most effectively, we strongly encourage you to write to our topic-specific electronic mailboxes as follows:

- ✓ American Citizen Services: acspap@state.gov
- ✓ Visas: support-haiti@ustraveldocs.com

In case of a life or death emergency regarding U.S. citizens in Haiti, please call: +509-2229-8000



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