

Emergency Message #3 – Hurricane Irene

U.S. Embassy Announces Authorized Departure for Dependents and Suspension of Regular Consular Services - Emergency Services for American Citizens Only

Tuesday, August 23, 2011, as of 4:30 p.m. EST

This emergency message is being issued to alert U.S. citizens residing and traveling in The Bahamas that due to Hurricane Irene, as of *Wednesday, August 24*, the U.S. Embassy in Nassau will suspend all regular consular services, including visa appointments, until further notice.

The Under Secretary for Management has approved the authorized departure of dependents of U.S. Embassy personnel prior to the arrival of Hurricane Irene – expected on Thursday morning, August 25. The Department of State has issued a [Travel Warning](#) advising U.S. citizens to defer travel to the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos. *We strongly urge U.S. citizens in The Bahamas to seriously consider departing while commercial flights are still available. It has been reported that the airport in the Turks and Caicos is already closed: U.S. citizens still there should see cover immediately. The ability of the U.S. Embassy in Nassau to provide services in the aftermath of a hurricane will be severely limited.* The Bahamas will soon be deciding if a suspension of flights is required. In general, Nassau's international airport is closed if wind speeds reach more than 40 mph.

A hurricane warning is now in effect for the entire Bahamas which includes the islands of Bimini, Grand Bahama, Abaco, Berry Islands, Eleuthera, New Providence, Andros, Long Island, San Salvador, Rum Cay, Cat Island, Exuma and Its Cays, Inagua, Mayaguana, Crooked Island, Ragged Island, Acklins and all the surrounding cays. A hurricane warning is also in effect for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas, to review emergency procedures and contingency plans, and to maintain situational awareness at all times. The Embassy will nevertheless endeavor to notify U.S. citizens of any further security developments.

The U.S. Embassy will continue to issue public announcements as information is received regarding the path of Hurricane Irene. Updates will be posted on the U.S. Embassy public website at <http://nassau.usembassy.gov>.

The U.S. Embassy will continue to provide emergency services for U.S. citizens, including cases involving deaths, arrests, hospitalizations and missing persons. Notarial services, reports of birth, and routine passport services would be suspended. Applications for emergency passport appointments would be considered only for stranded U.S. citizen visitors facing extreme hardship or those with a documented medical emergency. Questions and requests for emergency passport appointments can be sent to ACSN@state.gov

Routine visa issuances are not considered to be an emergency service and therefore would not be provided during suspended services. Appointments that have already been scheduled would be rescheduled by the call center.

Residents in the Southeast Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands should have completed final preparations and should continue to monitor the progress of Irene.

Residents in the Central Bahamas should closely monitor the progress of the storm and ensure that all pre-season precautions have been taken.

Storm surge will raise water levels by as much as 9 to 13 feet over the southeast and central Bahamas as well as the Turks and Caicos islands. The combination of the storm surge and the expected heavy rains of hurricane Irene will create severe flooding in coastal and low lying areas. Persons in these zones should seek higher ground.

Small craft operators in the Southeast Bahamas should remain in port and small craft operators in the Central Bahamas should not venture far from port.

Residents in the warning area should have already completed any necessary actions to reduce loss of lives and property, and should remain indoors in a secure dwelling or shelter during this hurricane. Small craft operators in the warning area should remain in port. U.S. citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events, weather and marine forecasts, and monitor the [National Hurricane Center](#) and local media to stay aware of any weather developments in their area. For official information from the Bahamian and TCI governments regarding weather conditions, please monitor ZNS or other local media outlets.

Additional information on hurricanes and storm preparedness may be found on our "[Hurricane Season-Know Before You Go](#)" webpage, and on the "[Natural Disasters](#)" page of the [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#). Updated information on travel in The Bahamas may also be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Please continue to monitor the Embassy's website for updated information.

For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens, please contact the U.S. Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section, located 42 Queen Street (across from the British Colonial Hilton Hotel), Nassau; telephone: 242-322-1181; after hours emergency telephone: 242-357-7004; ACS unit fax: 242-356-7174; e-mail: ACSN@state.gov; web page: <http://nassau.usembassy.gov>.

U. S. Embassy
Nassau, Bahamas