

## Crime Prevention News

March 2015



### Spring Break 2015: Have Fun & Be SAFE

Personal safety is the theme, once again, of our March newsletter. As we noted last year in this space, it is imperative that students exercise caution, especially when travelling abroad for Spring Break. Concerns over violence in Ukraine and the continuous possibility of political and social unrest in the Middle East have prompted the State Department to issue travel alerts for those areas. Note that travel alerts are issued when short-term conditions pose a significant risk to the safety and security of U.S. citizens. Travel warnings are issued to advise Americans to avoid travel to countries where long-term, protracted conditions make a country dangerous or unstable. Several countries meet that criteria, including Mexico, a popular spring break destination. And while resorts and tourist destinations generally do not see the level of violent crime that plagues border region cities and states such as Tijuana, Ciudad de Juarez, and Nuevo Leon, you should be aware that instances of crime and violence can occur anywhere. Columbia University's Department of Public Safety urges students to conduct diligent research before venturing out of the country. Following a few simple safety precautions can help make your Spring Break adventure a more enjoyable experience. (Check out the U.S. Department of State's website listed below. You can find valuable information, such as what to do if you are the victim of a crime or lose your passport. You can also sign up to receive travel alerts via Facebook and Twitter).

#### Before leaving

- Secure your dorm room or apartment.
- Unplug all appliances.
- Make sure all windows are closed and locked.
- Leave a copy of your travel itinerary with someone back home.

#### Use the buddy system

There is safety in numbers and it is best to do things as a group. Try to have at least three members of your group with you at all times when leaving your hotel. Don't leave a friend behind. If you go out together, come home together!

#### Drinking

If you are of legal drinking age and you do decide to drink, do so responsibly. Reports indicate that 98% of spring breakers who suffered injuries were intoxicated at the time. Note also that drinking to intoxication leaves a person more susceptible to becoming the victim of a sexual assault or other serious crime. Keep your drink in sight at all times. If you must leave an unfinished drink to go to the bathroom or dance floor, discard it and purchase a new one when you return.

Leaving a drink unattended gives anyone (including bar personnel) the opportunity to tamper with it.

#### DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE Use a designated driver or choose public transportation.

The most important spring break safety tip we can give you is to ask you to use common sense. Trust your instincts! If someone, or someplace, doesn't feel right to you, chances are it isn't. With these safety tips in mind, stay safe, and enjoy your sun-filled spring break! Please watch this short video of a special report from CNN on Spring Break-

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UhzYX9ubZQ>

#### Traveling

- If travelling abroad, check the U.S. State Department's Travel Alerts and Warnings at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)
- Conduct an internet search of the local Newspapers / Crime Stats / Trends of the area you will be visiting.
- Respect your host country and its people by following their laws and customs.
- Practice the country's language ahead of time. Bring a language dictionary to help.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Leave credit cards and ATM cards locked in a secure place.
- Keep track of your baggage and personal belongings at all times.