

Informing the American community in Syria



Town hall for American citizens

April 21st, 2010

2:00-4:00 pm

Damascus Community School Auditorium

During the week of April 19-23, representatives of several overseas American civic groups will visit executive and legislative branch officials in Washington, D. C. as part of [Overseas Americans Week](#) to share their experiences and concerns about life outside the United States. In honor of Overseas Americans Week, the U.S. Embassy will be hosting its first ever “town hall” meeting with the American citizen community in Damascus. A town hall meeting is an informal public meeting that gives the members of a community an opportunity to get together to discuss emerging issues and to voice concerns. It’s an opportunity for us to discuss the services that the embassy offers Americans and to hear from you about how we can work together as a community. The Damascus town hall will be held on April 21st, 2010 from 2-4pm at the Damascus Community School Auditorium. In addition to Damascus, we plan to schedule others in both Aleppo, and Latakia, while also offering our much requested off-site passport processing in these locations to ease the burden on families who need to renew multiple passports. We are tentatively scheduling the other events towards the end of May. Stay tuned for further information.

To come to the Town Hall, all you need to do is come to the Damascus Community School with your American passport. If you’re thinking of coming to the town hall, please let us know by sending an email to acsdamascus@state.gov



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American Women’s Club Meeting April 13, 2010

Interested in meeting other American women residing in Damascus? The American Women’s Club of Damascus (AWD) is holding their monthly meeting at the Damascus Community School Auditorium on **April 13, 2010 at 5:30pm**.

Most meetings involve a potluck feast, so bring yourself and a dish to pass.

Please RSVP to Ms. Leena Rammah at leena_rammah@hotmail.com.

As the event is held at DCS Auditorium, an American passport or valid photo identification will be required to pass through security to gain access to the compound.

U.S. Jazz Quartet performs on the Coast

The Chris Byars Jazz Quartet, a New York-based group known for its new, inventive style inspired by the 1950s Bop tradition, was on tour in Syria from March 21-28. The group performed for audiences and conducted workshops with Syrian music students in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo and Latakia.

The Quartet has travelled and performed widely as part of [The Rhythm Road](#), a U.S. State Department-sponsored program that takes American music to countries around the world. The Chris Byars Quartet members make it a practice to study the music and traditions of the regions they visit.

This was the Chris Byars Quartet's third visit to Syria. Last April and December, the group performed in Damascus and held a number of workshops and master classes with students at the Higher Institute of Music.



Chris Byars Quartet conducting a workshop with Syrian musicians in Latakia in March.

Tax Time



New IRS Website dedicated solely to Overseas Americans is here!

As a reminder, the deadline for filing U.S. tax returns is **April 15, 2010**, so if you aren't ready to file, be sure to file a request for an extension which would give you until **June 15, 2010** to file your return.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has created a new comprehensive tax page in order to better assist the growing number of Americans residing overseas. This new link available at: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html> is dedicated solely to U.S. citizens who reside abroad and covers a broad range of issues that overseas Americans need to know and also includes links to more detailed topics such as the foreign earned income exclusion, foreign tax credit, reporting foreign bank accounts, Fulbright grants, state taxes, and a myriad of other topics. Rather than navigating through www.irs.gov, this page will provide "one stop shopping" for U.S. citizens abroad by providing answers to most of Overseas Americans tax questions in one place. The site also provides information on how to contact the IRS to get additional assistance or for further inquiries.



**Interested in applying to an American university?
Don't forget certain tests are required for entrance.**

For further information, please contact the Education and Advising Testing Center at the American Cultural Center: Tel: (+963-11) 3391-4444 (ext.4171) or online at <http://damascus.usembassy.gov/eato2.html>

Testing Dates from the Education and Advising Testing Office

<i>Test</i>	<i>April 2010</i>	<i>May 2010</i>	<i>June 2010</i>
ITP	Thursday, April 8 Tuesday, April 13 Wednesday, April 28	Wednesday, May 12 Sunday, May 23	Wednesday, June 2 Tuesday, June 22
GRE	Subject Test Saturday, April 10	N/A	N/A
SAT	N/A	Saturday, May 1	Saturday, June 5
TOEFL	N/A	Saturday, May 8	N/A
TSE	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOEIC	Thursday, April 29	Tuesday, May 25	Wednesday, June 23

ITP: Institutional TOEFL

TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication

U.S. Eliminates Country-Based Scrutiny for Air Travelers



After consultations with governments and airline representatives, as well as U.S. intelligence and law enforcement personnel, the Obama administration has announced new security measures governing air travel to the United States that will screen all passengers based on real-time intelligence, thereby eliminating emergency measures that had focused on citizens from certain countries.

In an April 2 statement, the Department of Homeland Security said the new measures are designed to be more flexible and efficient, and are tailored to

“reflect the most current information available to the U.S. government” as a means of ensuring the safety of travelers.

“The enhanced security measures that are going into effect are tailored to intelligence about potential threats and are focused on all passengers from all countries,” the statement said. The change eliminates special scrutiny for citizens of 14 countries that was implemented after the attempted bombing of a U.S.-bound airliner on December 25, 2009.

“Passengers traveling to the United States from international destinations may notice enhanced security and random screening measures throughout the passenger check-in and boarding process, including the use of explosives trace detection, advanced imaging technology, canine teams or pat downs, among other security measures,” the statement said.

Since the attempted bombing, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has participated in regional aviation security meetings around the world to forge international agreements on “enhanced information collection and sharing, cooperation on technological development and modernized aviation security standards.” The statement said Napolitano has led a global initiative to strengthen airline security in conjunction with the U.N.’s International Civil Aviation Organization.

An Arabic version of this story can be found at www.america.gov

“The change eliminates special scrutiny for citizens of 14 countries (that included Syria) that was implemented after the attempted bombing of a U.S.-bound airliner on December 25, 2009.”

EARTH DAY April 22, 2010

Some scientists believe that we lack knowledge of 90 percent of the earth's creatures. With all the current research, study, and efforts to conserve energy, save species, protect natural habitats, and reveal our natural world, there is much more to discover. As we work to uncover our planet's mysteries, there is opportunity to protect and preserve the variety and abundance of nature.

Biological diversity is often shortened to the word *biodiversity*. The term was first used by wildlife scientist and conservationist Raymond F. Dasmanna in a 1970s book advocating nature conservation. In the 1980s it came into common usage in science and environmental policy. Biodiversity is the variety among living organisms from all sources, and the ecological complexes of which they are part. It encompasses diversity within species, between species, and of terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems.

In general, biodiversity is the totality of genes, species, and ecosystems in a particular region of the world. In his book, *The Diversity of Life*, Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard entomologist Edward O. Wilson describes the crucial importance of global conservation initiatives for our planet's biodiversity: "The ethical imperative should therefore be, first of all, prudence. We should judge every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to humanity. We should not knowingly allow any species or race to go extinct."

While staggering statistics describe the loss of species, degradation of the planet's ecosystems, and the threat of global warming, there are bright spots as well. Concerned and talented people dedicate their lives to serving the biosphere and biodiversity by working to restore wetlands and forests; to protect endangered animal species; and by researching ways to reduce pollution and produce clean air and water. It is an interdependent world. Biodiversity includes each living organism and the integral parts of nature that surround them.



**The United Nations has
designated 2010 as the
International Year of Biodiversity.**

"We should judge every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to humanity. We should not knowingly allow any species or race to go extinct."

**Resolve
to be
Ready**
in 2010

2010
NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS

1. Lose Weight
2. Make A Kit
3. Get A Plan
4. Be Informed
5. Remember Birthday

RESOLVE TO
BE READY

Ready.
www.ready.gov

Ad
Council

Are you Ready?

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has created a “Ready” campaign in order to educate and empower Americans wherever they are in the world, to take some simple steps to prepare for and respond to potential emergencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

The “Ready” Campaign asks individuals to do three key things:

- 1) Create an emergency supply kit
- 2) Make a family emergency plan
- 3) Be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and their appropriate responses.

All Americans should have some basic supplies on hand in order to survive for at least three days if an emergency occurs.



Following is a listing of some basic items that every emergency supply kit should include. However, it is important that individuals review this list and consider where they live, and the unique needs of their family in order to create an emergency supply kit that will meet these needs.

Individuals should also consider having at least two emergency supply kits, one full kit at home and smaller portable kits in their workplace, vehicle or other places they spend time.



SUGGESTED ITEMS

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and/or a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries

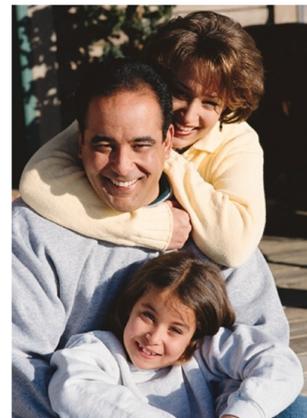
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone and chargers



Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:



- Important family documents such as Passports, birth abroad certificates for children born overseas, and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- Prescription medications
- Glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Cash or traveler's checks and change in both USD and local currency
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or hardcopy information from www.ready.gov
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children



Planning to Stay or Go

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so *it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations.* Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision to make is whether you **stay where you are or evacuate**. You should understand and plan for both possibilities.



Use common sense and available information, including what you are learning here, to determine if there is an immediate danger. In any emergency, local authorities, nor the Embassy may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for information or official instruction as it becomes available. For information on staying put or sheltering in place, [click here](#).

Emergency Plans

Use the **New** Online Family Emergency Planning Tool created by the Ready Campaign in conjunction with the Ad Council to prepare a printable Comprehensive Family Emergency Plan:

<http://ready.adcouncil.org/beprepared/fep/index.jsp>

Use the **New** Quick Share application to help your family in assembling a quick reference list of contact information for your family, and a meeting place for emergency situations:

<http://ready.adcouncil.org/beprepared/quickshare.html>

Be Informed

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both a natural or man-made emergency. However, there are important differences among potential emergencies that will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. Learn more about the potential emergencies that could happen where you live and the appropriate way to respond to them. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared and may make all the difference!


Family Emergency Plan


Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed.

Make sure your family has a plan in case of an emergency. Before an emergency happens, sit down together and decide how you will get in contact with each other, where you will go and what you will do in an emergency. Keep a copy of this plan in your emergency supply kit or another safe place where you can access it in the event of a disaster.

Out-of-Town Contact Name: _____	Telephone Number: _____
Email: _____	Telephone Number: _____
Neighborhood Meeting Place: _____	Telephone Number: _____
Regional Meeting Place: _____	Telephone Number: _____
Evacuation Location: _____	Telephone Number: _____

Fill out the following information for each family member and keep it up to date.

Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
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Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____

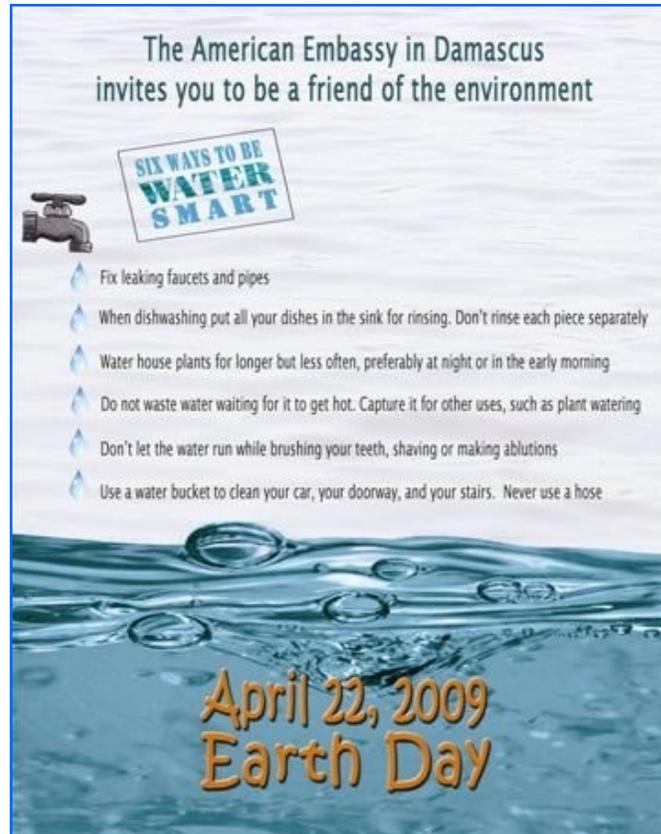
Write down where your family spends the most time: work, school and other places you frequent. Schools, daycare providers, workplaces and apartment buildings should all have site-specific emergency plans that you and your family need to know about.

Work Location One Address: _____	School Location One Address: _____
Phone Number: _____	Phone Number: _____
Evacuation Location: _____	Evacuation Location: _____
Work Location Two Address: _____	School Location Two Address: _____
Phone Number: _____	Phone Number: _____
Evacuation Location: _____	Evacuation Location: _____
Work Location Three Address: _____	School Location Three Address: _____
Phone Number: _____	Phone Number: _____
Evacuation Location: _____	Evacuation Location: _____
Other place you frequent Address: _____	Other place you frequent Address: _____
Phone Number: _____	Phone Number: _____
Evacuation Location: _____	Evacuation Location: _____

Important Information	Name	Telephone Number	Policy Number
Doctor(s):			
Other:			
Pharmacist:			
Medical Insurance:			
Homeowners/Rental Insurance:			
Veterinarian/Kennel (for pets):			

Dial 911 for Emergencies

The American Embassy in Damascus
invites you to be a friend of the environment



SIX WAYS TO BE WATER SMART

- Fix leaking faucets and pipes
- When dishwashing put all your dishes in the sink for rinsing. Don't rinse each piece separately
- Water house plants for longer but less often, preferably at night or in the early morning
- Do not waste water waiting for it to get hot. Capture it for other uses, such as plant watering
- Don't let the water run while brushing your teeth, shaving or making ablutions
- Use a water bucket to clean your car, your doorway, and your stairs. Never use a hose

April 22, 2009
Earth Day



American Citizen Services Hours and Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Damascus
American Citizen Services
Consular Section
2, Al-Mansour Street, Abu Roumaneh
PO Box 29
Damascus, Syria
Phone: 963-11-3391-4444
acsdamascus@state.gov

For appointments, please visit our website at :
<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/service.html>

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES

Thursday, May 06: Martyrs Day
Sunday, May 30 Memorial Day
Sunday, July 04 Independence Day

“Assisting approximately 4 million Americans who reside overseas and nearly 60 million who travel abroad remains a top priority for the U.S. Government.

Though consular work is punctuated by extraordinary acts to help U.S. citizens during times of crisis or urgent need, it is built upon a foundation of services provided to an American public that increasingly lives, works, and learns in the global community.”

-- Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan.