

New Year's Holiday 2008

This year's holiday begins on Wednesday, December 31, and ends on Sunday, January 4. During the 5-day period, government offices, stock markets and banks will be closed along with most businesses. Although Tuesday, December 30, is not an officially recognized holiday, many public offices and companies will use the day to celebrate the New Year, working only a half-day and allowing staff to leave early.

As a consequence, congestion on already overcrowded routes leading out of Bangkok will be severe on the evening of the December 30. On the afternoon and evening of Sunday, January 4, inbound routes will be similarly congested. Clients traveling by road or going to and coming from the airport should plan accordingly.

There will also be an increased number of police checkpoints throughout the holidays to curb incidences of drunk driving. However if the past is precedent, Thailand's highways will be hazardous due to drunk drivers, particularly during the evening hours.

Celebrations are also typically marred by displays of public drunkenness and wild use of fireworks. Each year police forbid the sale of fireworks during the holiday period, however the degree to which this prohibition can be enforced remains to be seen. If in public areas, PSA Asia urges clients to avoid groups of drunken youths, particularly if they are igniting firecrackers or acting in an aggressive manner.

The New Year is also a time when burglaries tend to increase as criminal elements take advantage of empty homes. PSA Asia recommends that clients leaving their residence store items of value in safety deposit boxes and ensure that all doors and windows are securely locked.

New Year's Eve Terrorism Alert

Officials have expressed concern over possible New Year's bombings, not dissimilar to the 2006 New Year's Eve bombings that occurred within the context of a significant political transition. This year, officials will be closely monitoring celebrations throughout Bangkok, especially the New Year's Eve "countdown" event at the World Trade Center (WTC) – also known as Central World – which is located in central Bangkok near the Chidlom BTS Sky train station. The area was one of several targeted in the 2006 New Year's bombings.

Although the government has announced the deployment of additional security resources throughout the holiday period, PSA Asia urges clients not to attend outdoor New Year's Eve celebrations; the collective resources of the city's security forces will be stretched thin, complicating efforts to sufficiently cover various high-profile New Year's events. The recent

election and continued political instability will further contribute to an environment conducive to trouble or even violence.

Clients should avoid Central World, the Four Face Buddha shrine opposite the Central World and the pedestrian overpass at the intersection of Rajadamri and Ploenchit Roads, near Central World. Clients should also avoid shopping areas at Gaysorn Plaza, Siam Square, Siam Discovery and Siam Paragon, all of which are in the general area of the Central World.

Clients are also urged to avoid large outdoor night markets and night entertainment zones, including Patpong, Nana Plaza and Soi Cowboy.

PSA Asia will be operating on limited hours during the Christmas and New Year's Holiday barring any unforeseen incident, at which point PSA Asia's crisis management division will be able to field client calls and issue Security Reports accordingly.

Have a safe and happy New Year.

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