

**AFS EGYPT**

**Safety Tips 2015**

**Please read carefully and bring it to your Welcome Orientation in Egypt. This handbook is a central part of your orientation and preparation for your AFS experience in Egypt.**

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# AFS EGY Rules and Regulations

***The rules and regulations described below are applicable to all AFS***

***participants hosted in Egypt, on all our hosting programs***

***By receiving this handbook, AFS Egypt will assume that you have read and understood our rules and regulations, and will expect full adherence from your part.***

While on the program, AFS participants are required to adhere to AFS IP rules, policies and procedures stated in the participation agreement. Moreover, AFS EGY has a set of rules and regulations that participants are required to adhere to while on the program.

## Legal age and authorizations

The legal age in Egypt is **21**. Many of our AFS partner countries have a younger legal age of 18. While on the AFS program, the participant is considered of legal age according to the laws of **the hosting country**. Hence, participants who are younger than 21 **will not** be of legal age in Egypt, and willrequire the signature of their natural parents/legal guardians for travel waivers, high-risk activity waivers, program release forms and other authorization forms.

## Alcohol consumption

The drinking age in Egypt is 21. Therefore, it is illegal for a participant under 21 to consume alcohol, and alcohol consumption constitutes a reason for program termination and early return (ER). Being the traditional conservative culture we are, many of our host families do not accept that their participant consumes alcoholic beverages, even if the participant is above 21. In case a participant who is of legal age consumes alcohol against the will of his/her host family, AFS EGY will terminate the program and will issue an ER.

For participants above 21 who have the consent of their host parents to consume alcohol while on the program, getting drunk and/or behaving in a culturally inappropriate manner as a result of alcohol consumption will jeopardize their participation on the program and are subject to program termination and ER.

**AFS Egypt has a zero-tolerance policy towards alcohol consumption.**

## Independent travel (trips that is not arranged by AFS Egypt or host schools)

Egypt may be a country that many tourists find interesting and fascinating, and where traveling seems like "the normal thing to do". AFS EGY **highly scrutinizes** independent travel while on the program, following the recommendations of AFS International, **as the AFS program is not a travel program**. Participants wishing to travel independently while on the program must obtain the approval of their host family, the authorization of the AFS EGY office and sign (or have their natural parents/legal guardians sign) an independent travel waiver before traveling. Failing to do so will mean that the travel is not authorized/ approved by AFS Egypt.

* **Procedures for authorizing an independent travel request**

1. Participant must secure the approval of his/her host family
2. Travel plans must not conflict with work/school obligations, family plans or AFS organized and obligatory activities (such as orientations).
3. Participant must inform his/her counselor, and ask for their approval.
4. Participant must fill out the **AFS EGY Independent Travel Request Form**, and submit it to his/her counselor who will communicate it to the office.
5. The office must be informed of this trip at least **two weeks earlier**, and the form must be submitted to the AFS office at least 1 week earlier. (Please bear in mind holidays in Egypt and your country. AFS staff will not work over the weekend or on holiday to process a travel request).
6. Participant (or natural parents) must sign an independent travel waiver and submit it before the trip for participants who are not of legal age. Participants who are over 21 will sign the independent travel waiver themselves.
7. Participant must commit to the information supplied in the Travel Request Form.
8. Participant must be chaperoned by (AFS Volunteer assigned from the chapter, his/her counselor, at least one member of the host family not less than 21 years old)

* **When will AFS EGY say "NO" to independent travel:**
* If the country is undergoing/underwent an unexpected emergency situation, such as, but not limited to: [[1]](#footnote-1)\*
  + - Political unrest
    - Terrorist attack
    - Natural disaster
  + If the destination of the participant has been rendered unsafe
  + If the participant has been facing adjustment problems/ difficulties
  + If the participant has been traveling independently while on the program
  + If the travel plan/conditions are not found safe in the judgment of AFS EGY:
    - Traveling with strangers, completely alone or in the company of the "wrong crowd"
    - Means of transportation not safe, we only authorize travel with public buses, train, and plane or in the company of a person with a valid driving license.
    - If the accommodation arrangement is not within the AFS standards, i.e. tent in the middle of the desert, remote area with no access to police or medical support…etc.
    - If the host family, natural family and/or counselor do not authorize the independent travel.
    - Other reasons that are left to the sole judgment of AFS Egypt.

AFS EGY **only** authorizes independent travel for YP participants **if** they are accompanied by responsible and mature adults.

For Community Service participants, AFS Egypt will not authorize independent travel to go on safari or camping in the desert under any circumstances.

## School/project commitment

All AFS participants are expected to demonstrate commitment towards school (for school-based participants) and to their project (for community service participants).

* For Year/Semester/Trimester school-based Program participants:
  + All participants must be fully aware of the importance of good academic performance. Students are responsible for completing all their assigned work, in-class and at home.
  + All participants are expected to behave properly as students in their schools. Proper student behavior towards school, teachers and fellow students is expected of AFS participants at all times.
  + All participants are expected to adhere to their school rules.
  + AFS Egypt does not tolerate unexcused absence from school. Students are expected to attend all school days. With the exception of being sick or having an excuse from the host family or AFS Egypt, unexcused absences from school will result in an assessment session with the participant.
  + All participants are expected to participate in all school activities and to be able to positively engage in the school life.
* For Community Service participants:
  + All participants are expected to actively contribute to their project.
  + All participants are expected to behave and dress in the most appropriate manner suitable for their project.
  + All participants are expected to adapt to their work conditions in the project and to demonstrate a will to learn, contribute and create.
  + AFS Egypt does not tolerate unexcused absence from the project. Participants are expected to attend all days in the project, with no tardiness. With the exception of being sick or having an excuse from the host family or AFS Egypt, unexcused absences from the project will result in an assessment session with the participant.
  + All participants are expected to participate in all project activities, and to be able to positively engage in their work community.

# Why do you need Safety Tips?

Sometimes, certain unexpected events could take place, leaving an impact that could interrupt your daily routines. Such events could be categorized as "natural disasters", but could also include other types, such as a terrorist attack, demonstrations, harassment on the street….etc. Also, these events could either have a direct, indirect or no effect on you. In all cases, you need to be prepared and to be able to handle the situation wisely.

In the event that a situation might occur that could have any kind of effect on your safety, it is very important to be able to:

1. Identify the situation
2. Analyze it.
3. Act accordingly

It is also very important to have a realistic assessment of the situation and your ability to handle it. Please do not overestimate or underestimate yourself. As an AFS participant you are both 1) surrounded by people to assist you and 2) well prepared to make "smart", well-informed decisions.

The following section is dedicated to guide you through some unpleasant events that you might possibly encounter, although we wish you a "worry-free" time in Egypt.

## Natural disasters:

Occasionally, certain parts of Egypt may encounter some natural disasters that have varying effects on the country and the people. Underneath is a list of such natural disasters and how we advice you to react to them.

*Periodic droughts, frequent earthquakes, flash floods, hot driving windstorm called Khamaseen, dust and sand storms*.

### Flash Floods

Flash floods usually result from intense storms dropping large amounts of rain within a brief period. Flash floods occur with little or no warning and can reach full peak in only a few minutes. Flash floods are not very common in Egypt. Usually, they would take place in the months of December and January. Streets in Egypt, and specifically Cairo, are not equipped for flash floods, and in a few minutes, traffic is paralyzed. In case of a flash flood, do not plan on taking long commutes, and be prepared that it could take you hours to get from one place to another, within the same city or even neighborhood.

### Earthquakes

A shaking of the earth caused by a sudden movement of rock beneath the Earth's surface. An earthquake occurs on a fault, which is a thin layer of crushed rock between two blocks of rock. A fault can range in length from a few centimeters to thousands of miles. Stress builds up and the rocks slip suddenly, releasing energy in waves that travel through the rock to cause the shaking that we feel during an earthquake.

Earthquakes are not very common in Egypt. Since 1992, Egypt has experienced a few number of strong earthquakes that resulted in the collapse or damage of a number of poorly built buildings, especially in the poor neighborhoods of Cairo, Giza and Alexandria.

Underneath are the instructions that the **International Red Cross** recommends that you follow in case an earthquake takes place:

#### Know What to Do When the Shaking Begins

* DROP, COVER AND HOLD ON! Move only a few steps to a nearby safe place. Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you're sure it's safe to exit. Stay away from windows. In a high-rise building, expect the fire alarms and sprinklers to go off during a quake.
* If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow.
* If your are outdoors, find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, and power lines. Drop to the ground.

Of course, stay away from balconies, and do not try to take the elevator or to go up or down the stairs.

If you are in a car, slow down and drive to a clear place (as described above). Stay in the car until the shaking stops.

#### Identify What to Do After the Shaking Stops

* Check yourself for injuries. Protect yourself from further danger by putting on long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, and work gloves.
* Check others for injuries. Give first aid for serious injuries.
* Look for and extinguish small fires. Eliminate fire hazards. Turn off the gas if you smell gas or think it's leaking. (Remember, only a professional should turn it back on.) Listen to the radio for instructions.
* Expect aftershocks. Each time you feel one. DROP, COVER AND HOLD ON! Inspect home for damage. Get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
* Use the telephone only to report life-threatening emergencies.

### Windstorm (Khamaseen)

Windstorms (also known as Khamaseen) are very common in Egypt. They take place every year at the beginning of the spring season (March – April). Khamaseen are heavily loaded with sand and dust, and they are pretty strong. During the Khamaseen, you are advised to refrain from outdoor activities. Do not leave the windows open, do not wear skirts and do not wear your contact lenses, as the sand could cause eye irritation.

**Other than natural disasters, you may encounter other events or situations, while in Egypt, that will require you to act/react in certain ways for your safety and well being. Although they are not pleasant situations, they are certainly learning experiences, and dealing with them will result in you learning more about yourself and learning more about dealing with different situations. However, we hope that you will not encounter any of them during your experience.**

## Terrorism

In general, Egypt is a safe country. While we do not believe your experience will be endangered by terrorist attacks, no one can ever say anywhere that there will not be any terrorism. Although Cairo and some cities in Egypt has suffered a few bombings and terrorist attacks during the revolution, things now are getting back to normal and stable.

If a terrorist attack were to take place, the safest place to be would be with your host family. If you are not at home, work or school, take a taxi back home or to the AFS office immediately. If, for any reason, you cannot go home, call your host family, your counselor or the AFS Egypt emergency number, and someone will come and pick you up.

After a terrorist attack takes place, it is advisable that you do not visit crowded areas, places with large numbers of tourists or to tourists’ areas, as it could be a target for another attack. In case of a terrorist attack, independent travel will be suspended, and will only be authorized again when AFS Egypt is confident that it is safe for the participants. This is a precaution to ensure your safety while on the program.

## Public demonstrations and protests

Some of the events around the world that either have a direct impact on many people in Egypt, or that are usually perceived with intense emotions, such as the war on Iraq and the situation in Palestine, lead to people demonstrating on the streets. Usually, demonstrations and protests take place in the downtown area, around universities and syndicates or close to embassies. You **must** stay away from demonstrations, and **not** take part in any of them, regardless of how you feel about the issue in question. In general, such demonstrations or protests are usually organized and the authorities are informed of their time and place, which creates a healthy environment for the demonstrations while ensuring the safety of other people not participating. Large numbers of protestors and demonstrators may result in riots and violence, causing the police to interfere. Stay away from areas where there are demonstrations and protests. Protests and demonstrations always cause traffic jams- be careful! If you feel you are stuck because of traffic, call your host family, counselor or AFS office, and someone will come and pick you up.

## Sensitive issues as a stimulant to demonstrations, heated debates and unpleasant conversations

A couple of years ago, the world witnessed the unpleasant conflict caused by the cartoons printed in some European newspapers that depicted the Prophet Muhammad. People around the world acted in different ways *[Variations of this incident continue to occur in different parts of the world]*. In the Muslim world, many people felt offended and hurt, and some saw this as an intentional act aimed at upsetting Muslims. In the West, many people were upset because of the Muslims' reactions, and saw those reactions as a threat to the freedom of speech. In Egypt, many people were very upset, and demonstrations and protest were organized to present to the international arena their feelings.

Naturally, situations similar to this one could be very challenging to AFS participants, particularly if they come from a Western country. It is for those reasons that we highlight important tips:

* + **Empathy!!!** This is a very important word in the AFS dictionary. It is important to understand why people feel, react and behave in certain ways; mostly a product of their value system. **You don't have to agree, but you should always try to understand**. Being able to empathize with people around you will help you determine the best way to act/react in different situations.
  + **Act according to your understanding**. Sometimes, there are certain topics that should be discussed with utmost diplomacy, and as an AFS participant, you are developing this talent. In many cases, it is better to **avoid** discussing a particular topic, and in others, you should discuss it **without challenging** the opinions or feelings of people around you.
  + **Talk to your host family and counselor**. Try to understand the issue in question, and ask them about the most appropriate way to handle it.
  + **Even if a topic is not as controversial as the example above, if you are ever in doubt, always talk to your host family and counselor. It may not always be about the topic. It could also be about the perceptions of people.**

## Crime

The crime rate in Egypt is very low in comparison to big cities in other countries.. Purse-snatching, pick-pocketing and petty thefts are not uncommon. Do not leave your cell phone, purse, wallet, shopping bags…etc unattended, and do not walk around the city with valuable belongings and large amounts of money.

## Harassment on the street

Unescorted women are usually vulnerable to verbal abuse, which can take place in the form of whistling and name-calling. If this happens to you…..IGNORE IT. Such harassments are usually not meant to lead to anything; it is merely for the “entertainment” of the person doing it. When you walk in the street, walk confidently. Do not avoid making eye contact with strangers, yet, do not look a stranger in the eye for more than one second. Do not feel obliged to talk to/answer anyone on the street. You will find most people on the street friendly and welcoming to foreigners, and they will try to speak in English to you and give you useful tips, but do not feel obliged to talk back to them.

It is also very important to know that foreign people, especially girls, attract attention. People may try to talk to you while saying nice words, or may try to be nice by starting a conversation. This kind of behavior could be annoying and frustrating, but this does not change the fact that it could happen to you. While we cannot change this kind of behavior, nor can we change the way you might feel about it, we can only recommend that you be patient and calm when dealing with this situation. Our strongest advice would be to ignore this person, pass by and don't even answer that person. You might feel that you are being rude, but you are not. This is the best way to deal with this kind of situation.

If you feel uncomfortable because of someone’s persistent behavior towards you, or if someone is harassing you, find the nearest police officer on the street and report to him. Also, other people on the street will not accept this behavior and may interfere to correct that person. Do not feel afraid of making people around aware of the behavior of the person harassing you, as they will interfere for your benefit. Do not make the mistake of not saying anything and accepting something you are not comfortable with. People **WILL** help you. To avoid this as much as possible, **do not** wear revealing or attracting clothes, as this is the main source of attraction that could invite others to act this way. It may sound like a simple precaution, but it is true. If you dress and act conservatively, you will attract much less attention than if you do otherwise. People on the streets in Egypt are not used to women dressing openly, and this could be interpreted as a sign of "open attitude" as well. Also, remember to walk confidently and to not act like a tourist.

You should be careful of people on the street who will try to get money out of you (U.S. dollars and Euros) especially in the market and the down town area. When buying anything, always and only pay in Egyptian pounds. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, you should call on a police officer, as this is a punishable offense.

## Sexual Harassment

Being in a different culture can often lead to confusion regarding what is perceived as appropriate behavior. As a general rule, your host family and AFS Egypt will have no tolerance to any participant engaging in sexual activity due to the conservative nature of our culture. However, AFS Egypt will support you in all ways, should you unfortunately be a victim of sexual harassment.

You may be unsure in some situations if you are being sexually harassed or if a person’s behavior would normally be considered friendly and acceptable in Egyptian society. In these cases, listen to your own inner voice **- if something doesn’t feel right, that probably means it isn’t!**  Asking your counselor or host parents for advice can help. While sexual assaults are very rare, it is always good to be prepared. In the event of an assault, contact your counselor or your host family.

In general, we would advice the following:

* Treat everyone you meet with respect
* Choose your friends and people you spend your time with carefully and wisely
* Do not hesitate to take your concerns to your counselor
* Do not let anyone force you into doing anything you are not comfortable with. Be very clear about saying NO.

# Important communication tips after any of the above situations take place

* Do not panic. Think calmly and use your judgment.
* Change your plans and head home or to your counselor's home (call first) immediately.
* Call your host family to assure them (especially host mothers) and inform them of how you are doing, where you are and your change of plans
* Call your counselor or local volunteer if you need advice
* Call the Duty Officer of AFS Egypt if you need immediate attention or help
* Phone lines could be busy after a national event takes place. Don't worry and **keep on trying.**

**Egyptian revolution 2011:**

The 2011 Egyptian revolution took place following a popular uprising that began on 25 January 2011. The uprising was mainly a campaign of non-violence [civil resistance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_resistance), which featured a series of [demonstrations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demonstration_(people)), marches, acts of [civil disobedience](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_disobedience), and labor strikes. Millions of protesters from a variety of [socio-economic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socio-economic) and religious backgrounds demanded the overthrow of the regime of [Egyptian President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_President) [Hosni Mubarak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hosni_Mubarak). Despite being predominantly peaceful in nature, the revolution was not without violent clashes between security forces and protesters. The uprising took place in [Cairo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo), [Alexandria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria), and in other cities in Egypt. On 11 February 2011, following weeks of determined popular protest and pressure, Mubarak resigned from office.  The power turned over to the [Supreme Council of the Armed Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Council_of_the_Armed_Forces) that announced that the constitution would be suspended, both houses of parliament dissolved, and that the military would rule for some months until elections could be held.

Parliament elections started in November 2011 and the new parliament was announced in January 2012. Precedential elections took part in June 2012 and a new president got elected. However after one year Egyptians started protesting against him because he didn’t do any of the revolution's aims. The army took the decision depose this president according to the will of millions of Egyptians which is great news. However there were still some people protesting against the army's decision. There is less violence happening everyday than the day before and this is expected but contained within the protest areas until summer of 2013. For now, We have a new president and things have become so stable in the country there are hardly any protests in Egypt you will hardly notice any abnormality anywhere else around the country.  We proceed with our normal daily life.

This revolution and movement is not targeting foreigners. We can safely say that no violence is involved towards non Egyptians and it is generally safe provided that general safety guidelines are followed.

**General tips**

· Stay updated on and respect all AFS announcements and instructions.

. Strictly follow safety instructions given to you by your family and consult with them when in doubt.

· Respect curfew hours as announced if any.

.Do not take part in any demonstrations, strikes or walks.

· Avoid public gatherings.

· You should carry some form of photographic ID at all times.

.Avoid conversations that could lead to polarized opinions with people you are not familiar with or do not know well.

.When answering the door bell at home, look through a peephole and make sure you identify the person on the other side

**Tips for females**

· Avoid taking cabs by yourself at night.

· Avoid wearing visible jewelry or items of value. Beware of pickpockets and bag snatchers, keep your bag closed at all times, on the shoulder or gripped in the hands, and don’t carry anything you can’t bear to lose. These are general safety instructions that you should follow in general anywhere you go.

# Health and Medical Facilities

There are many western-trained medical professionals in Egypt. You will receive the emergency contacts of AFS Egypt, and in case of a medical emergency please refer to them, or present them to the person helping you or to the doctor attending to you.

# AFS EGY Medical Plan

While on the program, AFS participants are medically insured, with the exception of preexisting, dental and eye conditions.

In case a participant needs medical care, they can visit the AFS doctor, whose name and contacts they will receive in the Welcome Orientation. The host family and the counselor will assist the participant in case medical attention is needed.

The AFS doctor will attend to their needs and transfer them to another doctor if needed. Participants are required to pay the doctor's bill and any other costs: blood tests, x-ray, medicine…etc, and submit bills to the AFS office for reimbursement. If a participant does not have money, they should inform their host family and counselor.

For reimbursement, participants will need to submit the AFS Medical Support Form, to be filled out by the AFS doctor, along with **all the bills\***. The host family and counselor will have a copy of the AFS Medical Support Form.

In case of a medical emergency, AFS staff **must** be notified immediately and all costs will be covered by AFS EGY directly.

**\*\*\* AFS EGY will only reimburse when bills are presented**

# Dress and Gender relations

The Egyptian culture is more traditional and conservative than what you might be used to back home. This characteristic increases when we talk about certain issues like: gender roles and dress code. Being in Egypt will require you to understand and adhere to the conservative nature of our culture.

Because Egypt is a very diverse country, you will find that people do things in different ways. Some families are more exposed to the West, and so they might appear to act in less conservative ways than other families. Some families are not. In all cases, there are important things to consider here:

* All Egyptians are conservative by nature. Even the ones who dress or act in a less conservative manner still "move" within the broader framework of the society. Being Egyptian means that they are aware of the expectations of the society, and they act accordingly.
* Most tourists in Egypt do not even attempt to adapt to the local customs. This is why if you do the same, people will assume that you are a tourist and will treat you this way.
* Host families and local volunteers will expect you to do the effort to adapt to our local ways. Please do not disappoint them.
* The real benefit of your time in Egypt will result from your effort to adapt. You will learn so much by trying to act according to the society's expectations, and you will also have fewer challenges if you try to do this.

The differences you will encounter in Egypt might be more than you expect. Some things might be somewhat confusing, especially dress and gender relations. In this section, we will try to provide you with basic explanations of those two concepts. Please do not hesitate to bring all your questions to your Welcome Orientation in Egypt, and to continue to share your questions with your host family, counselor and local volunteers. They will always be glad to assist you.

## Dress code:

Egyptians do not normally wear the "national costume" in the cities. Conservative Western clothing is what people normally wear. This means that you will find people wearing shirts, t-shirts, trousers, skirts, dresses…etc. However, they will not be too tight, too short, or too revealing. Conservative Western clothing is appropriate in most areas. It is **not advisable** to wear shorts, tank tops, sleeveless tops or spaghetti straps, unless you check with your host families. Dressing in such a conservative manner will give you a greater sense of comfort on the streets. This will be a choice you will make. For girls, you will not need to wear long sleeves or cover your hair. During the summer and on holidays, families usually go to coastal cities, where in most beaches it is acceptable to wear swimming suits. You will also need to check with your host family if it is appropriate for you to wear a swim suit, and whether you are choosing an appropriate one.

## 

## Gender roles/relations:

Egypt is typically seen as a male-dominant society. While this may appear to be true on the surface, your time in Egypt will prove otherwise. There are certain areas that are mostly dominated by males, on the social level, and this could be identified as **"macho attitude".** So, for example, it is males who can stay out late at night, smoke freely, whistle to girls, and even date girls, and act loud and freely in public. Females are expected to act more modestly in public. Nonetheless, you will see that both males and females enjoy and have access to pretty much everything else. There are no segregated places to go out to, no differences in the expectations of what is right and what is wrong (but may be more tolerance to male mistakes) and so on.

Gender-relations is another confusing issue to many foreigners, especially among teenagers. While it is widely common for males and females to form friendships, (to have friendships between males and females), the definition of friendship might be different from what you are used to. Remember that Egypt is a different, more conservative, Arab and Muslim country, where religion is an essential part of the daily life, and the values scale can be different from yours. What you might be used to calling a friendship might be seen differently in Egypt. We ask you to be very sensitive about this particular issue, because an unwise decision might cause problems in your host community or with your host family. Generally, it is preferred that boys and girls do not go out alone together, do not greet each other with kisses on the cheek, and the boy does not walk the girl to her home.

# 

# In or around home

Although families differ in their ways, they all have one thing in common… they are there to help you. For this reason, you should always take your questions and concerns to your host family, and they will guide you every step of the way. The key to a successful AFS experience is **communication,** and this is why you should always ask whenever you face an ambiguous situation. In the Appendix is a list of questions that you could ask your host family in the beginning, to familiarize yourself with your new home and community. Your host family will have a list of these questions, so that they can prepare the answers for you.

## Personal safety concerns outside the home:

Generally, participants should always ask the host family about any situation in which they feel uncertain or frightened. Your Egyptian family will probably be more protective (and sometimes stricter) than your family back home. You might have an early curfew, and you might have to account for your time better. Generally, when you leave home to go on an outing with friends, you should let your host family know **where** you are going, **with whom** and **at what time you will be back**. Some host families might ask you to leave the phone number of the home/person you will be visiting. If you have a cell phone, your host mother will most likely call you while you are out. All of this might not be appealing to an independent person like yourself; someone who traveled alone to another country. However, this is a sign of the care and love your host family has to you. By doing this they are not trying to control your actions or make decisions for you. On the contrary, this is how they present their love to you. This is what they would do to their own children- no matter how old they are- and as the newest member to their family, they will do the same to you. If you understand why they are doing this you will learn to appreciate them more, and will enjoy your time with your friends, knowing that someone is taking good care of you.

# Outside home

## Public transportation:

There is a great variety of means of transportation in Egypt, most of which are accessible to everyone.

We encourage you to use any of the following:

1. **Subway/ Underground**

Reaches the main areas of Greater Cairo. You can purchase a map for the underground at the American University in Cairo Bookstore.

The first two coaches are designated for women only, which allows for a safer, harassment- free trip.

It is a fairly cheap means of transportation, and if you will use it for your daily commute, you can purchase a one-month valid ticket.

1. **CTA Bus**

This is an air-conditioned bus that is very comfortable. Unlike other public buses, all passengers find a chair to sit on, it comes to a complete stop for passengers to get on and off, and it stops at all bus stations (major and peripheral). It is slightly more expensive than other buses, but much safer and more comfortable.

1. **Taxi**

Taxis have different colors depending on the city, for example:

* + Ismailia: Orange and white
  + Aswan: Whit
  + Alexandria: orange and black

All taxis have a sign that says “TAXI” and the plate numbers are painted on the doors as well. Not all Taxies have taximeter , so you should ask your host family or friends about the cost of your destination before you take a taxi, and you should agree with the driver before you get on the taxi. Taxi drivers tend to exaggerate the fare when it is a foreigner, but you should be confident when bargaining with the driver.

In Cairo and Giza, there is a new taxi service known as "London Taxi". This is closer to what you might be used to back home. To use this service, you call their hotline and order a taxi. These taxis use taximeters, and you can also get a receipt at the end of your journey but you cannot catch it from the street. Although a little more expensive than the regular taxis, it is more convenient, safer, the fare is the same for everyone.

1. **Walking**

In certain areas, you can enjoy a nice and quite walk, particularly by the Nile/sea. However, you should be aware that most of the streets are not well paved to accommodate for pedestrians. Be very careful when you walk in the street, and keep an alert eye on the speeding cars.

* Do not use short cuts; stick to main streets.
* Do not walk in narrow alleys
* Do not walk in poorly-lit streets
* Do not travel alone at night
* Avoid distractions while you are walking, such as talking on your cell phone.

1. **Microbuses:**

Privately owned and usually unmarked microbuses shuttle around all the larger cities. For the average traveler they can be difficult to use, as it is unclear where most of them go. However, quite often there’s a small boy hanging out of the doorway yelling the destination. Most of the cities and towns in Egypt have microbuses doing set runs around town.

Microbuses are reliable, quick and affordable. But passengers sometimes find the ride a little too exciting

## General Tips:

* **Money**:   
    
  It is strongly advised that you do not carry large amounts of cash on you. Traveler’s checks and credit/debit cards are strongly recommended and they are widely used in Egypt. **Change your money in banks only**. Carrying small notes of cash, on the other hand, is advisable as you will need it for public transportation and many of them refuse to accept large notes.
* **Customs Regulations:**

Egyptian customs regulations enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Egypt for items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, business equipment, currency and ivory. It is advisable that you contact the Embassy of Egypt in your country to check for the specific customs regulations. It is advisable that you keep medicines in their original labeled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug.

* **Country laws**

While in Egypt, you are subject to the Egyptian law and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in your country. Persons violating Egyptian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Law violation also causes the termination of your program and an early return.

Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Egypt are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

## Please remember:

* Get to know the Egyptian culture well through questions, dialogue and discussion with your host family, peers, and the AFS local volunteers.
* Take seriously any concerns that your host family, volunteers and/or school have expressed and follow their advice.
* As stated in the Agreement document you signed prior to leaving home, AFS Egypt will make recommendations and give guidelines for physical welfare and security. Take this advice seriously and comply with these guidelines.
* Do not ignore your own “instinct" in any given situation or feel you have to compromise your own personal behavioral values and beliefs. These are valuable resources in making decisions about what to do.

# Important phone numbers

Emergency Police: 122

Main Ambulance: 123

Tourist Police: 126

Fire Department: 180

Remember that the person receiving your phone call will only speak in Arabic.

# AFS Egypt emergency contacts

Before you arrive you will receive your host family application and the contacts of your counselor. Their contact information is for you to get in touch with them whenever needed, including an emergency. You will also receive an AFS card, with the contact of your host family and AFS in Arabic, in case you need someone's assistance. Below are the emergency contacts of AFS Egypt, **to be used only in case of an emergency**. The number is available 24 hours for you and your host family. An AFS staff will receive your phone call and will assist you as needed.

**AFS EGYPT Emergency (Duty Officer) Number: 0122 177 5128**

**as dialed from anywhere in Egypt**

When to call the AFS Egypt Emergency Number:

* In case you are facing an emergency situation and need immediate assistance
* In case you are lost and unable to reach your host family or counselor
* In case you are a victim of sexual harassment or physical violence

# Conclusion

When entering a new culture, you need all the help and assistance that you can get. You need to observe closely and think carefully before acting, in order to understand the ways of your new home. Seeking the help of those you trust (host family, your counselor, AFS volunteers and friends at work or school) is very important. Preparing for your experience is the first step towards having a successful experience.

We hope that you found our “Safety Tips” handbook useful. We wish you the best of luck on your experience, and looking forward to seeing you soon….

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### APPENDIX PERSONAL SAFETY CONCERNS IN AND AROUND THE HOME/ LODGINGS

1. Will I have my own key for the apartment/house?
2. Do you keep the doors locked at all times? Also when somebody is at home? Or are they locked only when nobody is home? Are they locked during the night? Who locks the doors? Will I be responsible for that when I am the last person to leave the house?
3. If somebody comes to the door can I open it? Should somebody else do it? What should I do if I am alone? What should I say?
4. What are the implications of losing a key? What should I do in that case?
5. If I arrive home unexpectedly to a locked apartment what should I do? Does anybody else have a key?
6. Please provide me with a telephone number that I can contact in case of emergency when I am alone at home.
7. Does the family have first aid equipment and a fire extinguisher at home? Where are they? How do I use them?
8. Should I answer the phone? When I am alone? When somebody else is home? What should I say? How do I recognize a harassing phonecall? How should I react?
9. How much information can I give on the phone? What information should I not give? Can I give the address to somebody calling?
10. Please show me the safest way to operate electrical and other appliances in the house. E.g. television, video, radio, stereo, gas stove, microwave oven, fridge, washing machines, etc.
11. If I am going out and nobody is at home, what should I do? What should I make sure is turned off before I leave? What should I leave on? How do I lock the door?

**In addition to those basic guidelines, you should discuss the following questions with your host family:**

1. Is it safe to walk around this neighborhood after dark? In which areas should I not walk after dark? In which areas will it be safe? Which areas should I never enter?
2. What are the precautions I should take to feel safe when I am in the streets? When I am alone? When I am with someone?
3. Is it appropriate and safe to wear jewelry in the streets? In my community service center or project? Are there other things I should not wear? E.g. make-up?
4. Which are safe ways to get around in the city? E.g. buses, minibuses, taxis, metro, underground. How do I do it?
5. How can I recognize harassment? (Whistling, winking, strangers following you in the street). How should I react? In the street? In other places? *There is a fine line between harassment and friendliness. It is wise for your safety to be cautious, and host parents will* ***not*** *approve of contacts made in the streets*
6. What should I do if I get lost or separated from my friends? Is there a map I can get? Are there public telephones? Which is the easiest way to get to a phone if I am lost in the streets? Whom can I ask for help? A policeman? Any passer- by? A traffic-policeman?
7. How should I react in the traffic as pedestrian? What is the safest way to walk in the street? How do I cross the street? Is it safe to cross everywhere?
8. How much money should I carry on me? Should I take any precautions in the way I carry it?
9. Is it generally safe to accept rides from friends and acquaintances (met at the school or project) in their cars?
10. Is it customary/normal in Egypt for a girl to have friends who are girls only? Who are boys and girls? To have a boyfriend? How are these relationships viewed by Egyptian society?
11. How do young people, teenagers in particular, deal with these social customs/laws?
12. If I am uncertain in a situation or about something, should I do like other people around me, or should I check with should I check with my hosting site?

**These issues will also be discussed in your Welcome Orientation.**

1. \* This is also applicable if a travel request has been already approved and then an unexpected emergency takes place. AFS Egypt automatically suspends all independent travel after an emergency takes place in the country, and all participants are notified of this by their counselors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)