

## Women's Safety

People often say that Japan is a safe place to live and work. While thefts of umbrellas and bicycles are not uncommon, your level of personal safety is pretty high, right?

Well, yes and no. It is true to say that there is not very much reported crime. However, many women in Kumamoto, both Japanese and foreign, have experienced some sort of threatening behavior. For example, women have been verbally harassed, groped, followed while walking, cycling or running. Women have been abducted, physically attacked, and have had strangers enter their home uninvited.

All of these have happened to women I know in the last three years.

These women had done absolutely nothing to provoke this treatment. Sometimes these incidents were random, and sometimes female ALTs were targeted simply because they are highly visible young women.

As such, female ALTs should be aware of how innocuous actions may be interpreted in light of Japanese culture. Unfortunately, some of the things that are perfectly natural and acceptable to us, can be seen in Japan as not only inappropriate but in some eyes, provocative. For example; going running in shorts and a tank top, exposing cleavage, being physically affectionate, walking home alone late at night etc. Be aware that these behaviors might cause suspicion to be directed at you instead of your aggressor.

### Hints and Tips

- Be aware of how wearing tight or revealing clothes might be perceived by the people around you.
- Keep your front door locked whether you are at home or not. In the past there have been instances where a person has let themselves into an unlocked ALT apartment without invitation.
- Be careful walking home at night. Sometimes it is impossible to avoid walking home alone in the dark particularly after work in winter, but when you do, be aware of your surroundings, don't listen to music or be staring at your cell phone. Call a friend. Let a friend know when you're leaving school and when you expect to get home. Be especially careful if you have been drinking and are returning home alone. If in doubt, get a cab.
- It is a good idea to have an emergency contact entered into your cell phone in English and Japanese.
- Make sure you know how you are getting home. Public transport ends earlier than in other countries, so make sure you know the last train or bus time home, or have enough money for a cab, as ATMs also shut down for the night.
- If you think you are being followed, you can go to a convenience store or a police box and ask for help.
- If you can, vary your route home. As ALTs we stand out and are easily noticed.

## Calling the Emergency Services

An emergency phone call can be made free of charge from any phone including public pay phones. If you cannot speak Japanese, you will be transferred to an English Answering service in Tokyo.

 **110** Emergency call to police

Call 110 to report an accident or crime to the police call center.

 **119** Fire, ambulance, emergency rescue

Call 119 to report a fire or to ask for an ambulance or rescue service or to contact an emergency call center (fire station).

## How to call a Taxi

(for more phrases and to hear pronunciations, visit this website)

<http://japanese-phrases.sakura.ne.jp/page11j.html>

Where can I catch a taxi? Doko de takushii ni noru koto ga deki masu ka?

どこでタクシーにのることができますか？

Please call a taxi. Takushii wo yonde kudasai.

タクシーをよんでください。

Can you take me to this place? Kono basho made onegai shimasu.

この場所までおねがいします。

Stop here, please. Koko ni tomete kudasai

ここにとめてください。