MediaRoom

Sixth Annual Farmers Insurance Study Ranks Most Secure Places to Live in the U.S.

Austin-Round Rock, Texas Tops All Large Metropolitan Areas

PRNewswire

In this time of economic uncertainty, a safe and secure environment in which to live, work and raise a family has become an even greater priority to many Americans.

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According to the sixth annual Most Secure U.S. Places to Live rankings from Farmers Insurance Group of Companies®, the central Texas area of Austin-Round Rock is the most secure U.S. community among large metropolitan areas (population of 500,000 or greater).

The Fargo (N.D.)-Moorhead (Minn.) area is the most secure mid-size U.S. city (population between 150,000 and 500,000), while the Lewiston (Idaho)-Clarkston (Wash.) area ranks as the most secure small town (population less than 150,000).

The rankings, compiled by database experts at www.bestplaces.net, took into consideration crime statistics, extreme weather, risk of natural disasters, housing depreciation, foreclosures, air quality, terrorist threats, environmental hazards, life expectancy and job loss numbers in 379 U.S. municipalities. The study divided the communities into three groups: large metropolitan areas, mid-size cities and small towns.

"Farmers congratulates all of the communities ranking in the Farmers Most Secure Places to Live study. "In today's fast-paced world, citizens look for a strong local government to make their communities secure, and especially desirable for individuals and families to live, work and grow," noted Robert Woudstra, Farmers CEO.

"Since its founding in 1928, Farmers has been committed to improving the communities where its customers, agents and employees live and work. Improving safety, expanding educational opportunities, enhancing health and human services, encouraging civic participation and supporting the arts and culture help drive Farmers' commitment," Mr. Woudstra added.

The Austin-Round Rock area, which was 15th among large metropolitan areas in the 2008 Farmers study, is a center for technology and business and is attracting more and more pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. Such Fortune 500 companies as Dell, Inc., Whole Foods Market and Freescale Semiconductor are headquartered there, with Austin serving as the state capital and home to the University of Texas. A high job growth rate and minimal housing depreciation contributed to its top rating in the study.

The Fargo-Moorhead area, ranked 14th among mid-size cities in 2008 and sixth in 2007, is a hub for healthcare, manufacturing and higher education. The area is home to three universities and several smaller, private colleges. Its No. 1 ranking in the 2009 Farmers study is largely due to a low unemployment rate, few violent crimes, minimal housing depreciation, high air quality and a long life expectancy among residents.

The Lewiston-Clarkston area, with a population of just under 59,000, jumped from sixth place among small towns in the 2008 Farmers study to the top spot in 2009. The area's access to the Pacific Ocean through a network of river, rail and highway transportation facilities provides an excellent business climate for what is regarded as the most inland seaport in the Western U.S. It scored high in the study due to excellent job growth, low crime and minimal housing depreciation.

Here are the Farmers Insurance Group's Most Secure U.S. Places to Live for 2009:

Large Metro Areas (500,000 or more residents)
1. Austin-Round Rock, Tex.
2. Des Moines-West Des Moines, Iowa
3. Madison, Wis.
4. Bethesda-Gaithersburg-Frederick, Md.
5. Rochester, N.Y.
6. Honolulu, Hawaii
7. Syracuse, N.Y.
8. El Paso, Tex.
9. Portland-South Portland-Biddeford, Me.
10. Nassau-Suffolk Counties, N.Y.
11. Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, Minn.
12. McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Tex.
13. Portland-Beaverton, Ore.-Vancouver, Wash.
14. New Haven-Milford, Conn.
15. Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, Conn.
16. Pittsburgh, Pa.
17. Seattle-Bellevue-Everett, Wash.
18. Colorado Springs, Colo.

19. Denver, Colo.
20. Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Mid-Size Cities (150,000 - 500,000 residents)
1. Fargo, N.D.-Moorhead, Minn.
2. Olympia, Wash.
3. Sioux Falls, S.D.
4. Bellingham, Wash.
5. Rochester, Minn.
6. Kennewick-Richland-Pasco, Wash.
7. Lynchburg, Va.
8. St. Cloud, Minn.
9. Duluth, Minn.-Superior, Wis.
10. Las Cruces, N.M.
11. Bremerton-Silverdale, Wash.
12. Killeen-Temple, Texas
13. Charlottesville, Va.
14. Provo-Orem, Utah
15. Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, Ark.
16. Green Bay, Wis.
17. Fort Collins-Loveland, Colo.
18. Boulder, Colo.
19. Yakima, Wash.
20. Yuma, Ariz.

Small Towns (Fewer than 150,000 residents)
1. Lewiston, Idaho-Clarkston, Wash.
2. State College, Pa.
3. Bismarck, N.D.
4. Logan, Utah
5. Ithaca, N.Y.
6. Wenatchee, Wash.
7. Corvallis, Ore.
8. Morgantown, W.Va.
9. Eau Claire, Wis.
10. Rapid City, S.D.
11. Midland, Tex.
12. Sioux City, Iowa
13. Harrisonburg, Va.
14. Billings, Mont.
15. Grand Forks, N.D.-Crookston, Minn.
16. Grand Junction, Colo.
17. Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford, Va.
18. Wausau, Wis.
19. Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Wash.
20. La Crosse, Wis.-Winona, Minn.

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