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Defense officials ask servicemembers in Germany to participate in off-base housing survey

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- Officials with the Department of Defense's Defense Travel Management Office are asking overseas servicemembers in Germany who live in privately leased housing and receive Overseas Housing Allowance to take part in its annual OHA Utility and Move-in Expenses Survey from May 4 through June 3.

The survey, which is designed to collect information on utility, recurring maintenance and move-in expenses, is used to keep the OHA rates for overseas areas up to date, DTMO sources said. Because accurate figures are needed, officials added, they recommend survey-takers have records and receipts that reflect actual housing expenses on hand when taking the survey.

The survey will "go live" on the Internet beginning May 4, at <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/oha/survey/utilitymiha.html>. An information sheet detailing the data requested by the survey can be found below.

For more information, call Kathleen Hammond or Tom Libera at DSN 312-426-7370 or commercial 703-696-7370 or by e-mail at Kathleen.hammond@dtmo.pentagon.mil or tom.libera@dtmo.pentagon.mil.



www.hqusareur.army.mil

Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) Utility and Move-In Expenses Survey

BACKGROUND: The Utility Survey is conducted every year, while the MIHA Survey is conducted once every three years. Therefore, every third year for every country, the PDTATAC Division of DTMO conducts a combined OHA Utility and Move In Expenses Survey to collect utility/recurring maintenance and move in expense data from Service members who receive an Overseas Housing Allowance. PDTATAC uses this data to prescribe the OHA Utility/Recurring Maintenance Allowance and Move In Housing Allowance (MIHA) for Service members worldwide.

The information provided is used to update Overseas Housing Allowance utility/recurring maintenance and MIHA/Miscellaneous rates for your area. The rates are based on the typical costs incurred by Service members living in countries outside the continental United States who live off-post or base, have a private lease, and receive an Overseas Housing Allowance.

MIHA/Miscellaneous is a fixed-rate one time payment that reflects average expenditures made by members to make their overseas housing habitable. Utility/recurring maintenance allowance is paid monthly to defray utility expenses incurred by the member.

It is important that accurate figures be provided in the OHA Survey. We recommend that the Service member use records and receipts to accurately determine the amounts actually spent. This survey may be taken at home. The Overseas Housing Allowance is a valuable entitlement for members who are stationed overseas. The time and effort spent answering the survey questions will enable the Department of Defense to set equitable OHA utility and MIHA rates.

THE OHA SURVEY

All Service members who reside in privately leased quarters overseas and receive an Overseas Housing Allowance will have an opportunity to complete the survey on the internet. No outside contractors will be involved in the survey.

The questionnaire will be similar in scope to previous surveys. The utility portion will ask Service members to report the average monthly cost of utilities and routine maintenance and the MIHA portion will ask member to report the costs incurred when first moving into their leased residence.

If members are able to access this survey from home, it is recommended that they take the survey with their spouses. Respondents may close out an unfinished survey and then complete it later. However, the unfurnished survey can only be accessed on the same computer on which was begun.

To complete the online survey, Service members will be asked for the last four digits of their Social Security numbers. Responses are held in strictest confidence and not shared with any other office or agency.

UTILITY PORTION

To complete the surveys, respondents should have actual bills or records of their utility expenses and maintenance expenses for the last twelve months. They will be expected to compute a monthly AVERAGE for each of these expenses.

MIHA PORTION

Respondents should have actual bills or records of expenses incurred when first moving into their residence. If expenses not listed in the survey are reported, a brief description should be included.

YOUR ROLE

You can support the survey process by getting the word out to the commands that the survey is being fielded and that members should make every effort to both take the survey and reflect actual incurred expenses.

ADVANCE GUIDANCE

Please use the information below to provide advance guidance when briefing commands, other points of contact or individual members about completing the survey.

A. Utility/Recurring Maintenance Expenses

1. The following items are included in the Utility Allowance and should be reported on the survey.

- a. Electricity
- b. Heating fuels
 - (1.) Natural gas
 - (2.) Liquid Petroleum gas (LPG or “Bombola”)
 - (3.) Fuel oil
 - (4.) Coal
 - (5.) Firewood
- c. Water for residence
- d. Bottled water for drinking
- e. Trash Pickup
- f. Sewer charges
- g. Maintenance and minor repairs (for example, replacement of windowpane, repair of electrical outlet)
- h. Insurance required by custom or law
- i. Condo fees, if not rolled-up into rent or paid as part of OHA rental allowance
- j. Police protection.

- k. Guards
- l. Taxes for which the tenant is responsible and must make a separately identifiable payment.

2. Examples of items NOT included in the Utility Allowance and should NOT be reported on the survey:

- a. Cable TV
- b. Tuition
- c. Monthly telephone bills
- d. Auto gasoline/diesel fuel
- e. Auto expenses
- f. Books
- g. Pet expenses
- h. Postage
- i. Road taxes
- j. Gifts
- k. Repairs to personally owned electrical equipment
- l. Maid service (Even if Maid Service is for Security Purposes).
- m. Yard Maintenance
- n. Any and all expenses not associated with the physical dwelling

3. How to compute average monthly costs for each item reported:

- a. Determine annual cost
 - (1.) Include annual catch-up bills if incurred
 - (2.) Add up quarterly, monthly bills to determine annual cost
- b. Determine monthly cost
 - (1.) Divide annual cost for each item by number of months at permanent duty station
 - (2.) Report average monthly costs on survey

B. Move In Expenses, Miscellaneous

1. The following items are included in the MIHA (Move in Expenses) and should be reported on the survey.

- a. Major appliances (refrigerator, freezer, stove, washing machine, clothes dryer, water heater, space heater, water purifier (if locally required), air conditioners, humidifiers and dehumidifiers).
- b. Utility hook-up/installation charges to include **non-refundable** deposits for telephone, electric, heating and water/plumbing. Security/safety items such as window bars, security doors, burglar alarm, smoke-detectors and lock/keys.

- c. Initial services and fees such as home inspection, fumigation, wall papering and painting (Only include these items if required when you first move into your residence.)
- e. Transformers and voltage regulators.
- f. Miscellaneous items such as kitchen, medicine, and bathroom cabinets and shelves, sinks, tubs, toilet seats, curtain and shower rods, window and floor coverings, permanent light fixtures, wardrobes, futons (East Asia only), insulation materials and screens.

2. The following items are NOT included in MIHA (Move In Expenses) and should NOT be reported on the survey.

- a. Rugs, curtains, and drapes.
- b. Lawn and garden expenses, fencing, or other yard related items.
- c. Dishwashers, microwave ovens, and small/personal appliances.
- d. Televisions, antennas, and cable installation.
- e. Light bulbs
- f. Taxes of any kind unless **required by lease.**
- g. Personal labor costs.
- h. Refundable deposits.
- i. Installation of internet.

3. Report all move-in expenses not covered by any other allowance. For those items, not separately listed on the survey, provide a brief description. Move in expenses that are rent or security related and for which direct reimbursement was received should not be included in the survey.

C. Currency:

Report all expenses in the currency in which you paid them. For example, if Electricity was paid in local currency, report amount paid in local currency; if Electricity was paid in U.S. Dollars, report amount paid in U.S. Dollars. Do not convert.

D. Comments:

Please enter any explanations or information that you think will help analysts better understand the data that you have entered in the survey. Add any additional utility and recurring maintenance and move in expense data that was not included in the survey.