

Civilian Personnel Guidance: Questions and Answers for Personnel Evacuating under the Global Authorized Departure March 20, 2020

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Note: On March 20, 2020, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, issue the memorandum, "[Authorized Departure – Individuals at Higher Risk from COVID-19](#)." This guide is intended to be used by Department of Defense (DoD) human resources practitioners when responding to COVID-19 at their local installations. Because of the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, all other DoD personnel should consult their supervisor or local human resources office before relying on the information contained within this guidance. Additionally, DoD Components are advised to follow their applicable collective bargaining agreements and consult with their labor relations specialist when seeking to follow the guidance contained within.

A. GENERAL

Q1. What is the difference between an authorized departure and an ordered departure?

A1. Authorized departure is voluntary for official family members and non-emergency direct-hire employees, and allows the Chief of Mission greater flexibility in determining which employees or groups of employees may depart. Ordered departure is not voluntary, and family members and non-emergency staff are ordered to depart post on evacuation status.

Q2. At what age do children become ineligible for evacuation-related payments under DSSR 600?

A2. Allowances eligibility for children usually ends when they reach age 21 (unless incapable of self-support due to mental or physical impairment). Evacuation-related payments under

Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) 600 are no exception to this rule. The definition of "children" found at DSSR 040m under "Family" governs their eligibility for foreign allowances except when waived or modified in specific DSSR sections that follow 040. DSSR 600 contains no such waiver or modification.

Q3. I am a DoD employee who has been evacuated in accordance with an official evacuation order. What financial assistance will the Department provide to me?

A3. If you are a DoD employee covered by an evacuation order, you are eligible for additional payments, which will help cover travel and subsistence expenses incurred as a result of your evacuation, and that of your dependents. Approved travel expenses and per diem are payable from the departure date through the date you and your dependents arrive at the safe haven. Approved subsistence expenses are payable from the date following arrival at the safe haven and may continue until terminated by cancellation of the evacuation order, return to the regular duty station, or other appropriate action.

B. PAY

Q1. I was evacuated, what happens to my pay?

A1. If you are covered by an official evacuation order and you are prevented from performing the regular duties of your position, you may continue to receive pay, commonly known as "evacuation pay," without charge to leave, for up to thirteen pay periods unless:

- the activity establishes an alternate work site for you;
- the evacuation order is terminated and you are directed to return to your official duty station;
- you fail to perform assigned work while evacuated; or
- you resign/retire from the Department.

Q2. I had no money available to me at the time of the evacuation. What should I do?

A2. If you are covered by an evacuation order, your activity may advance you an amount equal to what you normally would receive for two pay periods. The Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) will take statutory deductions required by law from your pay including retirement, social security (Federal Insurance Contributions Act tax), and income tax withholdings.

Q3. How do I apply for an advance?

A3. Generally, DoD Form 2461 "Authorization for Emergency Evacuation Advance and Allotment Payments for DoD Civilian Employees" is used for all civilian payments. You should contact your Component for further instructions.

Q4. Will I have to repay the advance?

A4. The advance payment is equivalent to a loan and must be repaid unless an authorized management official decides to waive recovery based on a determination that such recollection would be against equity or good conscience or against the public interest.

Q5. Will my evacuation pay be reduced if I receive an advance?

A5. No. An advance is subject to repayment, but evacuation pay is equivalent to the continuation of your regular salary for each pay period you are eligible.

Q6. How will I receive evacuation pay?

A6. The DFAS will make the payments on your regular payday either through electronic funds transfer or by hard-copy check. If you need your checks sent to an alternate address, you should notify DFAS of the address change by calling the DFAS Customer Contact Center at (888) 332-7411.

Q7. How is evacuation pay computed?

A7. DFAS will determine the days and hours each employee covered by an evacuation order would have been expected to work during the pay period. Payments include appropriate night pay differential and Sunday premium pay as well as any law enforcement availability pay, administratively uncontrollable overtime pay, standby duty premium pay, regular overtime pay for firefighters covered by section 5545b of title 5, U.S.C., retention allowance payments, physicians comparability allowances and supervisory differential, as applicable. DFAS will take statutory deductions required by law from the employee's pay including retirement, social security (FICA), authorized allotments, and income tax withholdings.

Q8. What are my responsibilities while receiving evacuation pay?

A8. Your activity may require you to perform any work considered necessary during the period of the evacuation without regard to your grade or normal job responsibilities. If your activity requires you to report to a work site in a different geographic location, you may be entitled to temporary duty travel allowances.

Q9. What will happen if I fail to perform assigned work while evacuated?

A9. Failure or refusal to perform assigned work is a basis for terminating evacuation payments.

C. SAFE HAVEN

Q1. What is a safe haven?

A1. A safe haven is a location or place officially designated to which an employee and/or dependents will be ordered or authorized to depart. Safe havens are designated by the Secretary of State; specifically the State Under Secretary for Management designates the United States (the 50 United States and the District of Columbia), a foreign location, or both when necessary as the official safe haven location(s).

D. SUBSISTENCE EXPENSE ALLOWANCE

Q1. When do Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) benefits commence for evacuees?

A1. U.S. or Foreign Safe haven: SEA benefits will commence from the day following arrival at the safe haven location. No SEA will be paid for travel enroute to the safe haven location.

Alternate Safe haven: If an alternate safe haven is approved prior to the eligible family members (EFMs) evacuation, SEA benefits will commence from the day following arrival at the alternate safe haven location. If an alternate safe haven is approved after evacuees have arrived at that location, SEA will commence no earlier than the date the Department approved the request for

the alternate safe haven. If the request for an alternate safe haven is denied, no SEA is authorized until the evacuee arrives at the U.S. or foreign safe haven.

Q2. What is the maximum time period an employee may receive SEA payments?

A2. An employee may receive SEA payments, up to a maximum of 180 days.

Q3. What happens to an employee's allowances, post hardship differential and danger pay during the period of SEA payments?

A3. Post hardship differential, danger pay and post (cost of living) allowance terminate as of the close of business on the day an employee commences travel under orders for emergency evacuation. "School at post" education allowance terminates without financial penalty. "School away from post" education allowance may continue until the end of the school year. Employees should check their earnings and leave statements for post hardship differential, danger pay and post (cost of living) allowance payments that should have been terminated. The employee is responsible for refunding any overpayments, which could become a debt.

Q4. Do SEA payments stop while an evacuated employee is on temporary duty (TDY)? What happens to the employee's evacuated EFMs?

A4. To meet the needs of the service, employees in evacuation status may be assigned TDY to another location. However, during the TDY period, when the employee is receiving TDY per diem, the payment of SEA for the individual is suspended, per DSSR 635(a). SEA may be resumed when the TDY ends.

EFMs at same U.S. safe haven as employee: If there are EFMs of this employee in evacuation status, one family member receiving SEA becomes the first evacuee and thus receives lodging per diem. The family is not disadvantaged since the total SEA benefit package is reduced by only one M&IE (meals and incidentals expense) allowance when the employee departs on TDY status.

Q5. May employees and EFMs on home leave or on R&R receive SEA payments?

A5. Employees and EFMs cannot receive SEA while on home leave or in R&R status. If away from post at the time of the evacuation order, the employee either must return to post or declare his/her intention to do so before any family member can qualify for evacuation benefits. Transportation may be authorized to the safe haven location. SEA may not commence for evacuees until each arrives at the authorized safe haven only after the employee has commenced official travel to the duty station (either to safe haven or return to post). Determination of the exact date may also in some circumstances depend on the date the employee or EFMs members were officially due to return to post.

Q6. Upon termination of an evacuation order, is there a grace period for continuation of SEA until the day an evacuee returns to post? What if the employee is being transferred and not returning to post?

A6. Upon termination of an evacuation order, an employee or EFM will continue to receive SEA for an automatic grace period of three (3) days except when the full 180 days has expired. For the employee not returning to post, only the three (3) days are allowed as long as he/she has not commenced travel under an assignment order to another duty location. For employees/family members returning to the evacuated post, an additional seven (7) days may

be authorized due to transportation delays. Evacuees must provide a statement on their travel voucher justifying the additional seven (7) days required to arrange for return travel to post, such as airline reservations and air freight pick up. Other reasons of a personal nature do not qualify the evacuee for SEA for the additional days. Under no circumstance can SEA payments be made to exceed the 180-day "clock".

Q7. Q: Is my nanny or caregiver eligible for SEA?

A7. Unless the nanny or caregiver is an eligible family member (EFM), the answer is "no." However, he/she may be the designated representative who is named by an employee for the purpose of caring for, escorting, or receiving monetary payments on behalf of an EFM.

Q8. How are SEA Payments determined?

A8. Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) is based on the locality rate of the authorized safe haven and begins the day after arrival at the authorized safe haven location.

The regulations provide that SEA payments will be based on the per diem rate of the chosen U.S. safehaven location, however, DSSR 632.3 allows an agency to pay a lower rate if the authorizing officer determines that such lower rate would be more in keeping with necessary living expenses. For example, if an evacuee submits a lodging receipt at a location where the per diem rate is lower than their safehaven, reimbursement can be calculated not to exceed the per diem of the lodging location. A U.S. safehaven location for EFMs may be changed once during an evacuation and SEA payments will then be based on the new U.S. safehaven. However, any change in safehaven location is at the evacuee's personal expense, except when previously evacuated EFMs are allowed to rejoin their evacuated sponsor (the employee) in Washington, DC (or wherever his/her U.S. work assignment location is during evacuation). Employees and dependents are reimbursed according to a commercial (with lodging receipts) or non-commercial (without lodging receipts) rate, NTE 180 days.

For the first 30 days:

Commercial Rate (requires receipts for commercial lodging) – For the first evacuee, up to 100% (or up to 150% for special family compositions) of the lodging portion of the locality rate plus 100% M&IE. Each age 18 and older receives 100% M&IE. Each under the age of 18 receives 50% M&IE.

Non-Commercial Rate (receipts not required) – For the first evacuee, a flat rate of 10% of the lodging portion of the locality rate plus 100% M&IE. Each age 18 and older receives 100% M&IE. Each under the age of 18 receives 50% M&IE.

For days 31 through 180:

Commercial Rate (requires receipts for commercial lodging) – For the first evacuee, up to 100% (or up to 150% for special family compositions) of the lodging portion of the locality rate plus 80% M&IE. Each age 18 and older receives 80% M&IE. Each under the age of 18 receives 40% M&IE.

Non-Commercial Rate (receipts not required) – For the first evacuee, a flat amount of 80% of M&IE. Each age 18 and older receives 80% M&IE. Each under the age of 18 receives 40% M&IE.

Employees in a paid leave status who are away from the post when the evacuation order is issued should immediately notify post of intention to return to work status to become eligible for SEA at the designated safe haven. The employee either returns to the PDS immediately or receives authorization to report to the official safe haven, or to a temporary duty station. SEA may not be paid to any evacuee authorized to receive travel per diem. SEA continues for employees/dependents while an employee in ordered/authorized departure status takes annual or sick leave. An employee in Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status is not eligible for SEA unless evacuated as a dependent.

Q9. When are SEA payments terminated?

A9. Entitlement to SEA payments ends on the earliest of the following dates:

- the date the employee commences travel under an assignment order to another duty station outside the evacuation area;
- the effective date of transfer when the employee is already at the post to which transferred;
- the date of separation;
- the date specified by the head of agency;
- 180 days after the evacuation order is issued; or
- the date the evacuee commences return travel to post.

When a departure (evacuation) order is terminated and evacuees are allowed to return to post, entitlement to SEA payments ends on the day that return to post is authorized. Normally a grace period of three, not to exceed ten days, is granted during which SEA may continue to be paid while an evacuee is making arrangements to return to post. The grace period taken must be justified on the employee's travel voucher (i.e. that the extra days were necessary to arrange return to post). SEA payments are limited to 180 days, the grace period included.

Q10. What happens after an evacuation has terminated and the post becomes unaccompanied, meaning family members can no longer go to post?

A10. Employees whose EFMs are in temporary commercial lodging should apply for Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA). Employees whose EFMs have been in non-commercial lodging should apply for Involuntary SMA. In lieu of Involuntary SMA for children in grades K-12, employees may consider the "away from post" education allowance option. Since SMA payments cannot be made retroactively, the employee should submit Standard Form (SF) 1190 to his/her agency appropriate authorizing official requesting SMA before the evacuation ends in order to take advantage of these benefits.

E. TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

Q1. Are evacuated employees and/or EFMs granted unaccompanied air baggage (UAB) for their departure from post?

A1. Yes, employees/EFMs are allowed UAB, as follows: Dependents may ship up to 350 lbs of unaccompanied baggage per dependent age 12 or older and 175 lbs per child under age 12 up to a total of 1,000 lbs. If dependents are unable to ship unaccompanied baggage by air freight because of circumstances beyond the dependent's control, an air freight replacement allowance may be authorized to help defray the cost of items ordinarily shipped that must be purchased.

The flat amounts per family are \$250 for an individual, \$450 for a family of two and \$600 (total) for a family of three or more.

F. EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL

Q1. What happens to the educational travel?

A1. Educational travel eligibility continues, and the designated safe haven replaces the foreign post as the destination from school.

G TRANSITIONAL SEPARATE MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (TMSA)

Q1. What is a Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance?

A1. TSMA may be granted to an employee whose family members temporarily occupy commercial quarters following termination of an evacuation or in connection with an unaccompanied assignment following termination of an evacuation and conversion of a post to an unaccompanied status.

Q2. How are TSMA payments initiated, received, and then terminated?

A2. An employee submits a SF-1190 that is processed and approved. Payments are made to the employee by payroll and continue until the employee submits an SF-1190 requesting termination of the allowance. The employee should submit this termination notice upon the initial occurrence of any of the following events:

- the date the employee commences travel under transfer orders from the evacuated post or the date of transfer if no travel is to occur under the transfer orders;
- the final day of the authorized period of the TSMA;
- the date the complete HHE shipment is received by the employee's family members;
- the date the family members occupy non-commercial quarters; or
- the date the family members occupy permanent quarters.

H. SINGLE PARENTS / MARRIED COUPLE EMPLOYEES/DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP EMPLOYEES

Q1. When married couple employees or domestic partnership employees depart post on evacuation orders, how are their SEA payments determined?

A1. Employees will each receive evacuation benefits not to exceed an employee's eligibility, but without duplication of benefits for family members on their orders. Both employees are considered to be the first evacuee. (This is based on married couple employees' or domestic partnership employees' eligibility for all other allowances, including transfer allowances and temporary lodging, on a per person employee basis. However, only 50% of the lodging allowance is granted for each employee if the employees are sharing lodging.)

Q2. In the case of married couple employees or domestic partnership employees with EFM children and only one parent/employee is being evacuated, on whose orders should the evacuated children be placed?

A2. EFM children should be evacuated under the name of the employee who lists them for allowances and benefits at post.

I. SHIPMENTS AND HHG PROPERTY

Q1. May POVs be shipped from the post to the safe haven point at government expense?

A1. No, POV shipments are not authorized. However, a safe haven transportation allowance of \$25 per day is authorized. The transportation allowance may not exceed \$25 per day, per family and may be paid at only one safe haven even if evacuees from the same family are at two different safe havens. Generally, no receipts are required, but may be requested.

Q2. May an employee have access to HHG while on evacuation status?

A2. Access to, delivery and return to storage of household goods for evacuees is at personal expense, not Government expense.

J. TERMINATION OF EVACUATION

Q1. When does an evacuation terminate?

A1. By law, an evacuation cannot last longer than 180 days, unless terminated earlier by the authorizing official.