

Family Liaison Office

Direct Communication Project

Paper No. 10

EVACUATION PLAN:

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT IT!

This material is written for employees and family members assigned to an American Embassy or Consulate abroad, but most of it is practical advice that would be useful to anyone living outside of their own country.

If you are assigned to an American Embassy or Consulate abroad, please contact your Community Liaison Office Coordinator at post or the Family Liaison Office for a copy of the complete pamphlet, including information about safehavens.

Evacuations are stressful experiences: Where to go? What to take? What personal papers are necessary? Stresses and frustrations can be reduced by advanced contingency planning on your part.

ESSENTIALS FOR OVERSEAS LIVING

Before Going Overseas on Assignment

- Make a list of the following for all family members. Leave a copy of this list with a trusted contact at home. Update periodically and carry with you when moving from one locale to another:
 - Passport numbers and dates of issue
 - Bank account numbers
 - Credit card numbers
 - Insurance policy numbers
 - Car registration, serial, and license numbers
 - U.S. driver's license numbers
 - Social Security numbers (including children's)
 - Current prescriptions, including eyeglasses
 - Contents and location of safe deposit box(es)

- Assets and debts
- Names and addresses of business and professional contacts
- Locate a safe depository in the United States and put the following into it (making copies of the items if you will need them at post):
 - Copy of will(s). Do not put original of will in safe depository. Originals should be left with lawyer or executor.
 - Power of attorney (one of the originals)
 - Birth and marriage certificates
 - Naturalization papers
 - Deeds
 - Mortgages
 - Stocks (or leave with broker in case you want to sell)
 - Bonds (or leave with broker in case you want to sell)
 - Insurance papers - life, car, house, medical, and household effects (HHE)
 - Current household and personal effects inventory
- Execute a current power of attorney for each adult family member and have several originals made. Make several copies as well. These are needed to transact business on behalf of spouse or other adult.
- Learn the current laws of your legal residence and place of domicile with regard to taxes and property.
- Establish credit that will be adequate for emergencies. Obtain individual credit cards for employee and spouse.
- Establish a joint checking account, or two joint checking accounts, enabling each spouse to work from either account in the event they are separated for a period of time.
- Consider getting an ATM (automatic teller machine) card for your bank account that can be used all over the country. Make sure both spouses know the PIN (personal identification number).
- Have the employee's paycheck sent to a U.S. bank account rather than to post. Checks lost in the mail can cause extraordinary difficulties.
- Put checkbooks, bankbooks, credit cards, some travelers checks, and a small amount of cash in a safe (but easily accessible) place.
- Keep a list of regular billing dates for all recurring expenses -- insurance, mortgages, and taxes.
- Make and continually update an inventory of all your possessions, including jewelry and clothing.

- Decide what to take to post and what to put into storage based on where you are assigned.
- Consider personal property insurance.
- Pack both winter and summer clothing, regardless of post.
- Update scrapbook and photo albums. Consider leaving sentimental photos or negatives in safe deposit box.
- Gather all employment documents for adult family members, including resumes and letters of reference. Keep duplicates in the United States.
- Keep an up-to-date locator card in the Foreign Service Lounge or with your agency. Be certain your emergency contact person is capable of dealing with an emergency.
- Make duplicates of all personal address lists.
- Discuss with your immediate and extended family what to do in case of an emergency (evacuation, hostage-taking, illness, or death). Give them the emergency telephone numbers for your agency.
- Take the Security Overseas Seminar. Foreign Affairs agency employees are required to take it every 5 years; spouses and teens are encouraged to take it. During the summer months, there are special sessions for teens and younger children.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT POST

- Attend the post security briefing.
- Keep up with the current security situation at post. Hold periodic family security meetings.
- Be aware of the warden system at post. Know who your warden is and ensure that your family information is current and accurate.
- Make an inventory of what you have brought to post and keep it updated.
- Learn some of the local language to help you in an emergency. In the local language, post a list of instructions and essential telephone numbers for household employees.

- Make the acquaintance of your neighbors early in your tour.
- Learn the location of the closest hospital, police station, and friendly embassy.
- Keep immunizations up to date and recorded in your yellow shot card.
- If you have children in local schools, check the school's emergency evacuation plan. Become an involved parent.
- If you have children, choose a surrogate parent at post and supply that person with a current power of attorney for medical or other emergencies in the event you need them to care for your children unexpectedly.
- Maintain a separate emergency supply/first-aid kit to be used only for emergency situations.
- Decide which necessary items should be taken with you in the event of evacuation or authorized departure and which items should be airfreighted later.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS: WHEN AN EVACUATION IS A POSSIBILITY

- Discuss possible contingency plans with family members. The United States is the designated safehaven. Families may go to any destination in the continental United States; employees are normally required to safehaven in Washington, D.C.
- Make a list of items to pack in each suitcase (normally each evacuee is allowed one suitcase).
- Make a list of items for carry-on baggage.
- Update current household effects inventory of items at post.
- Consolidate all personal records, financial documents, school records, etc.
- Prepare your house for departure -- secure valuables, if possible.
- Plan for pets. In almost all evacuations, your pets will not be allowed to go out on evacuation with you. Make advance arrangements for their care, food, etc. Keep the pets' records updated.
- Decide how money will be handled. Who will pay bills? Will you continue to use the joint checking account?

WHEN THERE IS AN AUTHORIZED OR ORDERED DEPARTURE

- Pack luggage with suitable clothing and essential items. Remember seasonal changes/weather conditions.
- Engage the children in packing their own backpacks or carry-on bags with toys, snacks, games, books, and other comforting items.
- Make sure carry-on baggage includes the following items:
 - Medications (prescription and over the counter)
 - Medical/dental records, immunization cards
 - Extra glasses and prescriptions
 - School records, report cards, test scores, and current samples of work
 - Current power of attorney
 - Birth certificates, naturalization certificates, marriage certificates (if at post)
 - Passports
 - Driver's license, auto insurance policies, auto registration, and title, if applicable
 - Personal checks, check registers, latest bank statement
 - Credit cards
 - Bills/financial records
 - Safe deposit box keys
 - Address book
 - Lists with names and addresses of doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc.
 - Travelers checks; U.S. currency, if possible
 - Household effects (HHE) inventory
 - Household goods insurance policy
 - Evacuation travel orders
 - Personal items and a change of clothing for each traveler
 - Snacks, juice, books
- Choose practical traveling clothes suitable to the climate of destination.

WHEN YOU ARE AT SAFEHAVEN

Important Note: Ordinarily, safehavens are in the continental United States. Permission must be obtained for a foreign safehaven. You will be moved to a safehaven only once; subsequent moves will be at your own expense.

- Assume that the evacuation/authorized departure will last longer than original estimates. Make plans accordingly.
- Keep busy. Think about the possibility of temporary, full- or part-time employment, or volunteer work.

- Keep in touch with fellow evacuees.

WHEN YOU RETURN TO POST OR RECEIVE A NEW ASSIGNMENT

If you return to the evacuated post, it is often helpful to meet with fellow evacuees to evaluate your experiences. As an evacuee, you can provide valuable input to post orientation programs at future posts.

CONCLUSION

No matter how calm things are at your post, you should not be lulled into thinking that “it can’t happen here.” In 1 year alone, 11 posts (from every region of the world) were under ordered or authorized departure orders at some point. More than 600 people were suddenly faced with making the kinds of decisions described in this booklet. Early personal preparation can alleviate some of the difficulties of an evacuation.

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