



**DEFENSE TRAVEL
MANAGEMENT OFFICE**

**Advance Guidance for
2015 Overseas Housing Allowance Utility Expenses Survey
Belgium**

The Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) Utility Expenses Survey is conducted annually on behalf of the Department of Defense, by the Allowances Branch of the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO). This year, the survey will be conducted from 1 October to 31 October 2015 for Belgium. The survey is designed to collect utility and recurring maintenance expense data incurred by Uniformed Service members stationed overseas, who reside in private housing. Your data assists in determining the Utility/Recurring Maintenance Allowance paid to Service members in the country surveyed.

If you receive OHA and meet the following qualifications, you should participate in the survey:

- Have been stationed in the country, where this survey is being conducted, for at least 6 months
- Reside in privately leased quarters (not a homeowner or sharer)
- Receive an Overseas Housing Allowance

If you have participated in previous OHA surveys, the questions will be similar in scope. You will be asked to report the average monthly cost of utilities and any routine maintenance expenses you incurred over the last 12 months.

Web Link

You may take the survey at the following link. This link will be activated on the survey start date of 1 October. The deadline to complete the survey is close of business (COB) 31 October 2015.

<https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/oha-util-oct.cfm>

Your Input Matters

The Overseas Housing Allowance is a valuable entitlement for members who are stationed overseas. You play a critical part as the data you provide will directly impact the Utility/Recurring Maintenance Allowance paid to members. Your time and effort spent answering the survey questions will enable the Department of Defense to set equitable OHA rates. We ask that you make every effort to take the survey and report your expenses accurately.

Participating in the Survey

The survey takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and should be completed by you or your spouse, whoever has knowledge of your housing expenses. A CAC is not required to access the survey; however, you will be asked to provide your DOD ID number, which is located on the back of your CAC.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and failure to respond will not result in penalty to the respondent.

It is important to provide accurate figures in the OHA survey. Before starting the survey, gather your bills, receipts, and/or records of utility and recurring maintenance expenses for the last 12 months and compute a MONTHLY AVERAGE for each of these expenses. In addition, there is a section of the survey for combined utilities when only one bill is received, such as a bill that combines cost for water and sewer.

You may save the survey, obtain additional information, and resume the survey at any time during the survey timeframe. Please note that incomplete surveys cannot be used as this might result in underreporting of utility/recurring maintenance expenses. Subsequent allowance adjustments based on incomplete data could disadvantage Service members.

Responses are held in strictest confidence and not shared with any other office or agency.

Special Survey Instructions

Combined utility bills: If you receive a combined utility bill (such as, water and sewer on the same bill), there is no need to separate this costs as there is a section dedicated to combined utility bills.

Currency: Report all your expenses in the currency in which you paid them. For example, if you paid your electricity bill in local currency, then report the amount you paid in local currency. If you paid your electricity bill in U.S. dollars, then report the amount you paid in U.S. dollars. Do not convert costs. If converted with the incorrect rate of exchange, the amount reported may not reflect the true cost.

Additional Comments: Please enter any explanations that might help us better understand your expenses. You may add additional costs that were not included in the survey. Do not include your rental costs, as our office already receives this information from the finance offices. For other costs not included in this survey, see the chart below.

Preparing for the Utility Survey

Utility/recurring maintenance expenses to report: The left column lists expenses which you should report in this survey. Expenses which should NOT be reported in this survey are listed in the right column.

Expenses that Should be Reported	Expenses that Should NOT be Reported
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity • Heating fuels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Natural gas ○ Heating oil ○ Liquid petroleum gas (LPG or “Bombola”) ○ Coal ○ Firewood • Running water • Sewer • Bottled water for drinking • Trash disposal • Maintenance and minor repairs (i.e., replacement of a window pane, repair of an electrical outlet, etc.) • Renter’s insurance required by lease or law, related to the physical dwelling, and identified by type of insurance. Examples are insurance for water or fire damage to residence, comprehensive, and liability insurance. Insurance expenses for your personal property should not be included. • Taxes for which the tenant is responsible, must make a separately identifiable payment, and are tied to the physical dwelling. For France, includes Habitation Taxes, if paid. • Condo fees, if not rolled-up into rent or reimbursed as part of OHA rental allowance • Recurring expenses such as, monthly monitoring fee for alarm system, if not included in the rent and reimbursed as part of OHA rental allowance • Police protection and/or guards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable TV • Internet charges • Tuition • Telephone bills • Auto gasoline/diesel fuel • Auto expenses • Books • Pet expenses • Postage • Road taxes • Gifts • Repairs to personally owned electrical equipment • Maid service (even if maid service is for security purposes) • Yard maintenance • Any and all expenses not associated with the physical dwelling • Rent (this information is provided to us by the finance offices)