

*USAG Benelux Pam 420-1*

**USAG Benelux**

**Housing Service Office**



Your guide to having the best housing  
experience in the Benelux community

**IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

Ambulance (English).....065-44-33-34  
 Police.....101  
 SHAPE Police.....065-55-33-34  
 Chievres MP's.....068-27-53-01

**Assistance Operators:**

Belgian Operator (English) 1405

**Housing Division**

Chief, Housing Division.....366-6394/065-32-6394  
 Chief, Housing Service Office.....366-6464/065-32-6464  
 Chief, Housing Referral Office.....366-6109/065-32-6109

Customer Service.....366-6391//065-32-6391

Housing Inspectors.....366-6285/065-32-6285

Appliance Repair.....361-5452/068-27-5452  
 Furnishings Office.....361-5477/068-27-5477

**Transportation:**

Transportation In-Bound.....366-6176/065-32-6176  
 Transportation Out-bound.....366-6156/065-32-6156

**Other Important Numbers**

School Bus Office.....423-4013/065-44-4013  
 SHAPE American School.....423-5718/065-44-5718  
 Army Lodging.....361-6711/065-44-6711  
 ICE Survey: Please provide feedback, it is paramount to our continued success.  
[http://ice.disa.mil/index.cfm?fa=service\\_provider\\_list&site\\_id=554](http://ice.disa.mil/index.cfm?fa=service_provider_list&site_id=554)

Welcome to USAG Benelux!

On behalf of the US Army Benelux Garrison Commander, the Director of Public Works (DPW) and the Housing Staff, I would like to welcome you to the SHAPE/Chievres Community. We wish you an enjoyable and rewarding tour while stationed in Belgium.

All new military and civilian arrivals and those who are changing their residence within the local area should report to the USAG Benelux Housing Service Office (HSO) before entering into a lease agreement for private rental housing. This is recommended to ensure that you do not inadvertently choose housing which would conflict with DOD policy regarding fair housing practices or expose yourself to financial, environmental or health hazards.

The HSO is staffed with welcoming and knowledgeable personnel who are ready to provide you with information and answer all your questions. Our mission is to provide the best possible housing service to every customer. This service takes the form of counseling, maintaining a housing referral listing, arbitrating tenant/landlord complaints, and informing customers of local housing customs. The professionalism, knowledge and experience of the staff can save you valuable time and money as well as minimize some of the inconveniences associated with relocation. If a situation should arise that a counselor is unable to provide you with a solution to your housing problem, please ask to speak to a supervisor in the office. Please give us an opportunity to settle any questions or problems you may have experienced in the Housing Office.

This handbook is designed to provide you with information about living in private rental housing. As a representative of the United States, you have the opportunity to not only learn about Belgian customs, traditions and hospitality, but also share American customs, traditions and hospitality with our Belgian neighbors

We hope you find this handbook useful and informative. Any suggestions for changes or improvements are welcomed. Your comments and suggestions for improvement are important and valuable to us. Additionally, please take the time to submit a customer questionnaire at our "ICE" website.

Sincerely,  
 The USAG Benelux Housing Services Team

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## Termination of your Lease Agreement

### *It Pays to Plan Ahead*

The USAG Benelux HSO will assist you with termination of your private rental property. Report to HRO with a copy of PCS orders 45-90 days prior to vacating private rental housing. The HSO Staff will assist you in completing the termination package. All documents must be filled out and returned to HSO prior to clearance of private rental housing whether you are departing the area, resigning, retiring, moving to government controlled housing, or moving from one private rental to another. You are encouraged to have a pre- inspection at least 45 days prior to your termination date to assist you with clearing details so you can have a successful out inspection.

### **Termination Notice**

Per the terms of your lease agreement and Belgian law, you are required to provide your landlord a MINIMUM of 30 days written notification of your intent to terminate your lease agreement. *Notice of termination should be sent by registered mail or hand delivered with a signature from the landlord indicating they received the termination notice.*

### **Return of the Security Deposit**

The majority of customers vacating private rental housing will receive all or most of their security deposits. However, failure to return the mazout to the original level, not properly cleaning the house or repairing damages to the property that are considered beyond normal wear and tear may incur damage costs that may be equal to or exceed the security deposit.

### **Cleanliness and condition of property for termination**

It is imperative that the house is clean, the yard has been cleaned and maintained and that all damages have been repaired. The HSO staff can perform a pre-inspection to assist you with preparing for termination of the private rental.

### **Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA) Outbound**

Service members are entitled to a maximum of 10 nights of TLA when they reside in private rental housing. Requests for extension need to be submitted in advance through the HSO office.



## Deployment Information Guide

This is an excerpt of the Deployment information guide. The guide covers policies and procedures regarding the occupancy of private rental housing during deployment. It is intended to provide instruction and to advise personnel regarding their deployment. The housing division personnel are the points of contact for any housing related issues regarding deployment. Please get an information package from the housing office for details. Personnel who reside in private rental housing have the following options:



### Retain private rental Housing

- Will continue to be paid OHA
- Must notify their landlord and HSO of extended absence
- Provide the name, duty address, duty and home phone of person who will be responsible for the care and upkeep of the quarters to the landlord and the HSO

### Move out of private rental housing (prior to or during deployment)

- Should notify their landlord in advance if you intend to move out of private rental housing
- Written notice must be given to the landlord as specified by the lease agreement and the lease requirements for cleaning, damages and renovation fees must be fulfilled
- Movement and storage of household goods during deployment will be at government expense.
- Personnel subsequent move into new quarters upon return from deployment will also be at government expense

### Moving from One Set of Economy Quarters to Another

Moving from one set of economy quarters to another can be costly and difficult. A termination notice must be given in accordance with the contract (PCS clause does not apply here), the old rental unit must be cleared and all the administrative paperwork (OHA, turn-in of government furnishings and appliances) must be completed prior to or in conjunction with signing of the new lease agreement. Examples of situations not qualifying for a government funded move are:

1. Moving from one off post house to another off post house
2. If the HSO has offered you government quarters at some point and you turn them down.

Personnel may request for the Furnishings Branch to move only government appliances from one set of quarters to another at a cost. The cost includes disconnection/reconnection and transportation charges. This fee cannot be waived.

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## Overview of Housing Services

### Housing services Mission:

Provide personalized and conveniently available services to assist eligible DOD Military and Civilian personnel and their families in locating suitable, non-discriminatory private rental housing.

### Services Provided:

- Assistance in locating a home through HSO listings, newspaper advertisement real estate agencies or on line services
- GPS to assist with house hunting for newly arrived personnel
- Listing of private rental housing with non-discriminatory landlords
- Assistance with rental negotiations and lease renewals
- The HSO will provide you with a lease agreement in French and English.
- During the lease signing appointment, you are encouraged to ask any questions that pertain to your rental property.
- Language interpretation when dealing with the landlord and provide a bilingual contract
- Administrative assistance when dealing with utility companies, telephone installation and bill paying
- Inspections (move-in/Pre and Final Out inspection) reports of the premises with tenant and/or landlord
- Assistance in obtaining furniture and appliance support
- Assistant in resolving minor tenant and landlord complaints
- Housing briefing on home finding
- General information on military and civilian housing allowances

The HSO is a full service operation that will assist you with any situation related to your housing needs. If there is a service not listed that you need, please ask. If you do not receive the response or answer that you feel you need or desire, please ask to speak to a supervisor.

## Proper Reporting Procedures on Damages to private Rental Property

When damages occur to your quarters during delivery of household goods and/or Unaccompanied baggage, you **MUST** record the damages on one of the following Documents listed below.

- Carrier/Agent Survey Sheet
- DD Form 1840
- DD Form 619
- DD Form 619-1
- Inventory List
- Plain Sheet of Paper (if necessary)



When damages occur, the resident must contact the Quality Control (QC) inspector to report the damages. The QC inspector will have the Lead Packer note the damages on DD Form 1780. If the Lead Packer refuses to note the damages on DD Form 1780, the QC inspector will make a statement as to why the Lead Packer will not note the damages or how the damage occurred.

If the QC inspector is not available, the resident must note how the damages occurred on one of the documents listed above. The resident should ask the Lead Packer to acknowledge the damage and record it on the carrier/agent survey sheet, a plain paper of paper, or one of the listed documents above

After the resident has recorded their statement on one of the documents above, the resident will provide a copy of the statement to the USAG Benelux Transportation Office and a copy to the HSO to be placed in the lease file.

The resident must also notify the landlord immediately of the damage and a professional estimate will be prepared for the necessary repairs. The original estimate will be provided to the QC inspector from the transportation office.

The USAREUR Consolidated Personnel Property Shipping Office (CPPSO) QC Division will forward under formal correspondence documentation of the damages and the documented estimate for repair. For Private Rental housing, the payment for damages will be made to the Landlord via check or electronic fund transfer, as specified by the landlord

We advise you to develop a working relationship with your landlord and create an atmosphere of respect. Most landlords speak a little English and are readily available when problems arise. However, keep in mind that some owners may be absent, inaccessible or unable to speak English.

Do not assume that your previous stateside rental experiences are applicable in Belgium, because they are not. Belgium laws hold the “Lessee” responsible for maintenance that would ordinarily be the responsibility of the landlord in the United States. Check with your housing authority regarding these differences.

### Repairs/Redecorations

Since the burden of proof is always on the tenant, it is important that you carefully inspect the leased property prior to signing the contract. Both parties should agree upon a detailed written description of the condition of the premises (move-in/move out condition report). You are not responsible for normal wear and tear. But be careful the term “wear and tear” is interpreted very strictly in Belgium courts. For example, stains on walls are not considered fair wear and tear, normal fading or discoloration of paint is.



Redecorations of the premises is usually referred to as decorative repair. It normally includes wall papering or painting of walls and ceilings. Unless damage is caused by you, your family or friends, the landlord is responsible for repair and deficiencies of the premises. This is part of their obligation to maintain the premises in proper condition. However, you must promptly notify the landlord or any necessary repair and allow them reasonable time and access to the premises to make the repairs. On the other hand, small repairs are generally your responsibility.

### Move-In Inspection/Burden of Proof

The HSO staff will perform a joint move-in inspection with you and your landlord. This inspection should be conducted within the first few days of move-in. Ideally the condition report would be done the first day. If for some reason, a HSO representative cannot be present, we strongly urge you to conduct the inspection with the landlord. The purpose of this report is to accurately reflect the condition and contents of the dwelling, and meter readings at the time of occupancy. It further ensures that the dwelling meets adequacy standards as determined by HSO, and protects both the tenant and the landlord from unreasonable claims when the dwelling is cleared. The burden of proof for pre-existing damages to the premises is with the tenant. You are also urged to take pictures of the house at the time of the move-in inspection to further document the condition of the house.

The move in inspection form provided by the HSO is bilingual and self-explanatory. Meter readings for electricity, water, and gas, if applicable will also be annotated on this sheet. At the end of the inspection both parties, landlord and tenant will sign the condition report.

### Fair Wear and Tear

Fair wear and tear (FWT) is defined as normal occurrence of expected wear to a component, system or any part of an assigned housing unit as a result of wear from normal use. An item that has been repaired or replaced before its full life expectancy has been reached due to neglect or failure to correct the cause of the damage or improper maintenance is considered beyond FWT.

### Snow and Ice Removal

Snow and ice removal is a safety requirement. Although it typically does not snow in Belgium, we do have occasions with freezing rain, hail and sometimes snow. Residents of private rentals are required to remove snow and ice from around their homes. In the event of an unfortunate accident because you failed to clear your walk way, driveway or other access points to your rental property you could be held liable and possibly sued.

### Antennas and Satellite Dishes

You must receive approval from your landlord to install antennas or satellite dishes and should be annotated in the lease agreement.

### Yard and Garden Maintenance

Belgians take great pride in having a well kept garden and a beautifully kept garden is very much a part of their culture.

- ✓ If you are responsible for the maintenance of the yard/garden do not enter into a VERBAL AGREEMENT with anyone to perform work. Have it in writing or you will be held liable.
- ✓ If you are responsible for the maintenance of the garden, you need to maintain it as much as required, a spring and fall clean up is highly recommend to assist you with maintaining the yard.

### Bills

Pay bills within 10 days of receipt. You can pay utility bills and rent at the Belgian Post Office with/without an account, Fortis Bank if you have an account or Andrews Federal Credit Union.

**NOTE:** Money for bill payment must be deposited in your account at the Belgian Facilities five days prior to the payment date.

### School Bus Information

DODDEA school busses will provide transportation to school from private rental housing areas. Eligible personnel will be required to in-process at the School Bus Office in the SHAPE American School. Personnel who live outside the current school bus routes will be responsible for arranging private transportation for their children to get to school. A signed statement by the sponsor/guardian in their HSO files is mandatory prior to the HSO counselor approving the rental agreement.



### Rent Payment

**Withholding rent as a tool is against the law in Belgium.** Under Belgian law, the rental contract you sign requires you to pay your rent on the first of each month. Should you fail to do that and your case goes to court, you will be found in violation of the law and be required to pay their rent in question, and legal fees. This action will also remove you from the moral high ground you might have held against the landlord to fix whatever problem is at the source of your dispute.

### Required or Requested Maintenance or Improvements

Are there improvements that you may expect or want to ask the landlord to do to the house? You must talk to the landlord about these issues well in advance of the contract signing appointment so that the landlord has time to research the possibility and cost of the improvements you want to make. Be careful of the verbal agreement, put requested work in writing well in advance to give the landlord an opportunity to determine feasibility. Ensure that agreed upon work is in Clause 7 of the lease agreement and the work is to be completed by a certain date. Some things worth considering are:

- ✓ Painting or wallpapering
- ✓ Replacing carpet
- ✓ Screens (hard to obtain)

We cannot predict how a landlord will react to your questions. Some make improvements while others refuse to do so. Generally, the landlord's prior experience and financial situation makes the difference. Advance warning to the landlord can make things easier for the new tenant. Naturally, all your requests cannot always be answered on the spot. The landlord must be given time to consider his options and make rational decisions. It never hurts to ask!

We often have questions about installing hot water outlets for US washing machines. When the heating system is close to the laundry room, the landlord generally agrees to install a hot water pipe. Some landlords may increase the price of rent if you request that they install US hook-ups.

### Security Deposits

A security deposit is required on all private leased dwellings; it may equate to one or two months rent. The deposit is the landlord's safeguard in the event that the tenant moves out and leaves unpaid bills or damages to the property.

## Before you Sign the Lease.....



As you begin your house hunting it is very important for you to know that Verbal Agreements are binding and can be disastrous to you in court. Do Not commit to any verbal agreement. Read each article in the lease carefully. When you are ready to sign the lease, you, the landlord and the housing official will go over the lease, together at which time any questions you may have should be brought up and answered to your understanding. If you do not understand something, ask a HSO counselor to explain.

- ✓ **Ensure:** All blanks of the lease are filled in or those blanks not filled in should be crossed through.
- ✓ **Caution:** If you feel a landlord is requesting something unreasonable, check with your HSO counselor or the Legal Service Office.
- ✓ **Translation:** The USAG Benelux Lease agreement is in both French and English and the HSO staff will provide translation services for you.
- ✓ **Determine:** Did you get all of the required paperwork completed? Does the lease refer to any "house rules" which you must follow?
- ✓ **Know:** What does your rent payment cover? Does it cover just the use of the premises or does it include utilities? Which utilities are included in the rent payment? Are you liable for these? What date is the rent due? As a tenant you are entitled to see all bills for costs for which you are charged. Ask to see the bills and ask the landlord to explain them to you. Usually you pay a prorated/estimated amount for utilities which will be reconciled based on annual meter reading by the respective companies.
- ✓ **Article 7 – Military Clause/Release for US Government Housing:** Article 7 allows you to cancel the lease should you receive military orders to leave your current duty station, retire from the military or civilian workforce or other stipulated reasons. This article is effective as long as the total length of a tenant's residence in a dwelling is thirty-six months or less. If you are on the waiting list for housing, be sure that Article 7 in your lease permits cancellation should you be offered government housing or be ordered to move to the barracks. The military clause is not acceptable to some landlords and may be deleted from your lease.
- ✓ **Lease Registration with City Hall:** All leases in Belgium must be registered with the local city hall. This is a requirement of your landlord.

**Items that are NOT LQA Allowable Cost:**

- Agent fees except mandatory by law or custom and if lessee's payment of fee is a condition of obtaining the lease.
- Concierge or notary fees
- Telephone installation or maintenance
- Servant's wages or maintenance
- Tips
- Cleaning or redecorating
- Storage
- Garden or lawn service
- Renovation fee
- Central heating and cooling system inspections, safety inspection and related cleaning

**Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance (TQSA)**

TQSA is authorized for employees hired from CONUS who are eligible for living quarters allowance to help offset the expenses of temporary lodging, meals, and laundry expenses for up to 90 days upon arrival. TQSA is paid at the new overseas duty location only. During in processing at the new duty station, the CAPC will provide the appropriate forms that need to be completed for TQSA.

**Energy Conservation**

**RULE OF THUMB:** The more energy you consume the higher your bill will be. Americans typically use more water, electricity, and heating fuel than Europeans. **MONITOR YOUR UTILITY METERS** Use of electric heaters in **Not RECOMMENDED** and will result in very high electric bills. Residents are urged to conserve energy, use fluorescent lighting, unplug transformers when not in use, repair dripping faucets or running toilets.

**Security systems**

Rental property should be equipped with door and window locks as a minimum. Alarm systems are an option and can be beneficial in deterring break-ins.

**Utility Costs**

Utility meters, water and electric are read on an annual basis in Belgium. Your utility bills are based on the previous resident's consumption. You are urged to utilize the meter reading form, monitor your usage and adjust your monthly payment as necessary.

**Gas and Electric**

Gas and electric meters are read only once per year in Belgium. Meters are read by an official meter reader or by the tenant. You may receive a letter requesting your meter reading which must be completed and mailed back or it can be done on the internet. The time of year when this is done varies from commune (town) to commune. You will receive gas and electric bills on a monthly basis. This bill is only an estimate of what your end-of-the-year bill (catch-up bill) will total. This estimated bill is based on the previous tenants or your previous year's bill. After receiving the first catch-up bill at the end of the year, the monthly estimates will be adjusted to reflect the actual usage.

How to avoid the unpleasant and sometimes expensive surprise when your first catch-up Bill arrives:

- Note original meter readings when you take occupancy. Ensure this is noted on your move-in inspection.
- Monitor your usage each month. Take a new reading when you receive your first estimated bill. Subtract your original reading or previous reading to determine your actual consumption.
- Compare the consumption amount of the estimated amount the company has set for your home.
- If you are considerably over, set money aside every month so you will be prepared to pay for the large catch-up bill. Contact the HSO Staff to assist you with adjusting your monthly payment with the electric company.
- Keep all receipts to prove how much you have paid.

**Guidelines for Meter Readings**

You are advised to read your meters periodically. Charts for computing gas and electric usages are available at the housing office. When using these charts, write down the meter reading number when your bill arrives and compute the consumption cost to compare to the amount paid. Any cost over your payment will be part of the annual catch-up cost.

**Oil Heat**

When you rent a house that uses heating oil “Mazout”, you will need to make arrangements with the landlord to fill the tank to the same level upon departure, this should be annotated in your lease agreement “Special Clause 17”. During the winter you should monitor usage to avoid running out of oil. Some companies will make routine deliveries throughout the year. You pay a set amount on a payment plan and then once a year, the oil company settles the bill for your own deliveries. Oil prices are usually cheaper in the summer, so many families arrange for the delivery at the cheaper price and start the winter with a full tank. There is usually a minimum amount of oil that you should order to get a discount on the price. If you have less delivered to keep your bill lower, you will be paying considerably more per liter. Remember to put money aside for oil deliveries.

**Water**

Utility bills for water are usually sent quarterly. Each residence should have a water meter that shows usage. The meter should be read when you move in. Most communes now include a pollution charge as part of the annual bill. The pollution charge is based on the amount of water used. If a water bill arrives with a previous tenants name on it, bring the bill to your housing office to have it corrected.

**Garages/Basements** In Belgium, garages and basements are not intended as storage for personal property. They are typically below ground, damp and only intended to house the mechanical systems. Residents are encouraged to find alternative storage for personal property.

**Telephone Services**

BELGACOM is the only Phone Company in Belgium for telephone service. They do offer internet as well. If transferring phone services to your name, be sure that the last tenant has paid the balance of their bill any unpaid balances from previous tenants will be added to your bill. If this happens, contact your housing office immediately. Telephone service bills are sent every two months in Belgium.

**Internet Service Providers**

There are many Internet options to choose from while in Belgium. Listed in the phone book or on the Internet, you will find several ISP (Internet Service Provider) companies in the area. An Internet account may also be set up through Belgacom with usage fees included on your phone bill. We suggest that you research all available options and choose the one that best fits your budget and needs.

**OHA FRAUD :**

If involved in OHA fraud, you are subject to action IAW UCMJ (Uniformed Code of Military Justice), loss of entitlements to OHA, and in the event of overpayment you will be required to reimburse the US government. Use of OHA to pay for things other than housing debts, failing to report changes in rental price or status, resulting in overpayment of OHA or knowingly accepting OHA in an amount greater than your entitlement, are examples of fraud.

**Annual OHA Survey:** Each year the Per Diem committee requests data by Internet for overseas housing allowances for service members receiving OHA. You must complete this survey and indicate your annual expenses to live in private rental housing. The survey is the tool the Per Diem committee uses to determine what the OHA rate will be for that OCONUS location.

**GUIDANCE FOR CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES HOUSING ALLOWANCES**

For detailed information please visit the CHRMA website at

[www.chrma.hqsareur.army.mil/](http://www.chrma.hqsareur.army.mil/)

**Allowable Expenses for Living Quarters Allowance (LQA)**

Reimbursement of living quarters allowance will not exceed the authorized annual cost of rent and utilities or the maximum allowance rate set by the Department of State, whichever is the lesser amount. DFAS uses the employee’s authorized foreign currency expenses to convert the amount to US dollars using the exchange rate provided by their office. DFAS also automatically adjusts LQA payments each period when changes occur in Department of State maximum rates or foreign currency conversion rates. DFAS makes LQA allowance payment to the employee in US dollars.

**LQA Allowable Cost**

Basic rent, electricity, fuel, (heating & cooking), water, sewage, garbage and trash disposal, taxes and fire insurance.

**As-Needed Utility Costs:**

There are some utility costs that occur on an as-needed basis. These include items such as heating oil, gas, (propane/butane), wood, these items are purchased as needed by the employee. The employee must then submit a claim for reimbursement. This may be submitted in conjunction with LQA reconciliation request, or if the reconciliation has been completed, they may be submitted as they occur. The employee can also choose to retain the receipts and submit a single request for reimbursement.

**OHA rates are revised periodically based on currency fluctuations and annual OHA Surveys.**

**Move in Housing Allowance (MIHA)** is a one time payment used to defray the move-in costs associated with occupying private rental at the OCONUS location.

- To be eligible for MIHA, a member must be eligible for OHA.
- Eligible members are authorized MIHA for one dwelling unit during the tour at the PDS.

**There is no entitlement when:**

- Local move to another private rental
- A member executes a PCS but remains in the same private rental or,
- A member moves from government quarters to a private rental due to separation or retirement

**Two Components of MIHA:**

- **MIHA miscellaneous:** This is a one-time lump sum payment intended to cover items such as sinks, light fixtures, kitchen cabinets that are sometimes not provided in overseas rental properties.
- **MIHA Security** - is an allowance for service members assigned to areas Determined to be at high-risk areas. Belgium is authorized MIHA Security.

**Advance OHA:**

Service members may request advance OHA to pay rent and/or security deposits and/or initial expenses incident to occupying economy housing. (Excludes all expenses identified by a soldier that will be used in the purchase of any real estate or living accommodations). The amount to be advanced will be determined on the basis of the anticipated expenses and the housing allowance rates prescribed by the Per Diem Committee for the OCONUS location. The HSO will validate the requested amount before the service member's commander approves the request for pay advance. Failure to process the request through the USAG Benelux HSO will result in non-payment of OHA. Contact your servicing finance office for additional information.

**Television Sets**

American television sets (NTSC) can only be used for AFN Television (American Forces Network). Multisystem Entertainment system (TV/DVD) can receive both NTSC and PAL signals and are compatible with multisystem. However, they must be set to European voltage while in Europe and then be switched to American voltage upon return to the United States.

**American Forces Network Television**

American Forces Network (AFN) Television, part of the American Forces Radio and Television Services is broadcast throughout the Benelux. However, AFN is transmitted on a horizontal frequency and viewers must live in the beam footprint to receive it. While some areas may receive the frequency with the antenna that comes with your American Television, others require a special indoor antenna that is sold at the PX. If an outdoor roof antenna is needed, be sure to check with your landlord before mounting anything to the structure of the house.

**American Forces Network Radio**

AFN Radio is broadcast throughout the Benelux, AFN radio provides its listeners with a full range of informative programs in English. News service and live sports are broadcast from the US via satellite. Local programming includes daily currency exchange rates, weather, school news, and community events.

**Cable Service/Satellite**

Many residence subscribe to a cable television service to extend their range of channels through Belgacom. This includes programs from Great Britain (BBC) and the Netherlands (which broadcasts many American programs in their original English version) AFN is not a part of this cable package. Satellite systems are also available locally and require approval of the landlord to install a satellite dish on the property or installed on the house.

**Renters Insurance**

Insurance can be a difficult subject but it is a necessity while living in Belgium. In the SHAPE leases, the landlord is usually responsible to maintain insurance on the rental property, although the landlord may require the tenant to obtain their own insurance. This is a provision of your lease agreement Clause 6. The amount of coverage required must be computed based on the value of the property, the landlord must be a part of the process and will be able to provide you information on the value of the property and current insured value of the property.

- Private insurance policy with a company established in Belgium
- US Company authorized to do business in Belgium
- Only obtain the minimum insurance required by law!!
  - Ensure that the house/apartment building itself is covered and nothing else. If there were a fire in your house, the cost of repairing the house is covered by your insurance. The landlord's insurance covers his area of responsibility.



What Optional Coverage can be included?

Renters insurance for personal property is highly recommended.

Liability insurance protects you if someone is injured on your rental property, which could result in legal action.

Legal Assistance Insurance. Insurance to cover any legal expenses (lawyer's fees Etc) and gives you a legal advocate to protect you and your rights.

#### Trash Disposal Recycling

Recycling is a Law in Belgium. It is the responsibility of all residents to participate in local recycling programs, more specifically the use of biological waste, paper waste and household waste bags. It is very important to separate trash and to place it into the proper bags. Don't collect, mix and store full garbage bags on the balcony, terrace or in the basement. It is the tenant's responsibility to ensure waste is properly sorted and placed into the proper Container. Failure to comply with Belgian trash laws may result in severe fines

Each commune establishes its own method of waste collection and collection days. You will receive a flyer with current trash pick up days for your commune at the time of the lease signing and also in the Belgian mail.

- Special color coded garbage bags for general, paper, plastic, and glass
- Waste collection points or container parks for recycling
  - Bottles, cans, papers
  - Cardboard, plastics
  - Hazardous waste (batteries, paints, cleaning solvents etc)

Your commune will announce a once a year bulk trash pick-up for non-hazardous and non-recyclable items such as large bulky items, mattress, box spring, sofa, tables etc



#### Garbage Fee

Sort and recycle trash. Garbage bags are for household trash and recycle bags are for recyclable materials. The annual garbage fee is set by the Belgian government and you must pay the bill when it comes.

#### Income Taxes

Request for income tax is sent in May addressed to the primary family member.

Take the request and the family member's ID card to Customer Service in Bldg 253 and return the completed form to the Belgium Ministry of Finance. Failure to return the packet is costly.

## Allowances

#### Military Pay Entitlements and Allowances:

Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA)

TLA is an allowance to partially defray costs of living in transient quarters during PCS. Service members who have/have not been issued a CNA must aggressively seek private rental housing. Service members should not rely only on the HSO to meet this requirement. Failure to aggressively seek private rental housing together with your HSO counselor on a daily basis will result in the immediate termination of your TLA. The following reasons **ARE NOT** grounds for refusal of an adequate private rental and will be counted as a turn-down.



- Too far from duty station and/or community activities
- Lack of transportation (public or private)
- Personal property will not fit into the dwelling unit
- Spouse does not like dwelling unit or its location
- Stairs in lieu of elevator (this may be waived if registered in the Exceptional Family Member Program)
- Not near enough to medical facilities (this may be waived if registered in the Exceptional Family Member Program)
- Pets not allowed
- Requirements by military unit of assignment

#### Exception to Policy for TLA

Should you require an exception to the 30 day TLA policy, you must request an extension of TLA at least 10 working days prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> day of TLA. Your HSO counselor will assist you in processing your ETP

#### Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA)

OHA is paid in lieu of Basic Allowance for Housing (BHA at OCONUS) locations for service members authorized to reside in economy housing OHA is a cost reimbursement based on allowance and defrays service members housing cost and includes the following Three components:

- Rent
- Utility/recurring maintenance expenses
- Move-in housing allowance (MIHA)

#### Allowance Payable

The amount of OHA payable is based on:

- The member's reported rent amount, up to the locality OHA rental allowance plan.
- The appropriate utility amount based on the member's status.

**Restrictive-Sanction List**

If you feel that you have been discriminated against because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or handicap by a landlord/agent or persons dealing with your rental property, it is imperative that you submit a written complaint to the HSO. The HSO will investigate the complaint to determine if a violation has occurred. However complainants should consider that the fair housing provision of the Civil Right Act are not applicable outside the United States. The equal opportunity housing program will be carried out to the extent possible within the laws and customs of Belgium. If your alleged violation has been validated, the landlord/agent will be placed on a restrictive sanction list by the USAG Benelux Command.

**NON-Referral List**

Landlords will be placed on the non-referral list by the USAG Benelux Commander when it has been determined that an individual use unethical business practices, substandard housing, history of failing to fulfill the terms of the rental agreement. US personnel entering into a rental agreement with a landlord who is on the non-referral list do so at their own risk. The HSO office will not give approval for the rental unit, nor will the HSO staff assist in settling any disputes or problems between the tenant and the landlord.

**Military and Civilian Personnel Housing Requirements**

Prior to seeking off-post housing, US Military and Civilian personnel regardless of service or command must in-process through the HSO, Building 209 on SHAPE within two business days of arriving in the Benelux. To complete the housing application process, personnel will be required to provide copies of their orders, verification of date of departure from last permanent duty station, verification of dependents, who traveled OCONUS with the member and other housing entitlements.

A housing determination will be made at the initial In-processing of the housing office. Service members who cannot be housed in government controlled housing will be issued a Certificate of Non-Availability (CNA) to reside off-post at government expense.

US Civilians are not authorized to reside on the installation and will aggressively seek private rental housing to reduce Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance (TQSA).

**Radio & TV Tax**

Turn paperwork into the VRO office in building 210 on SHAPE

**Ventilation of Rental Property**

Residents must ventilate their homes daily by opening windows to create a cross draft which will dry the house out. By ventilating your home daily for 10-15 minutes and after each shower, mold and mildew should not be a problem. If mold and mildew do develop, open windows in the affected area to facilitate drying, scrub the mold spots with a solution of 1 cup chlorine bleach and 1 gallon of warm water, rinse and then wipe dry. In the case of mold and painted surfaces, allow this solution to soak in, then scrub lightly, rinse and wipe dry. In bathrooms without windows, make sure that the ventilation shaft is open and do not close the bathroom door following showers and baths. The bathroom will benefit when cross-ventilating other parts of the house.

**Septic Tasks**

A rental property with a septic tank requires emptying at least once a year or when the tank is full. The septic system has natural bacteria that digest the waste. Using household chemicals such as Drano, Clorox, Pine-Sol (etc) can kill the bacteria. Products to refresh the bacteria can be found in the local grocery stores.

If you should notice a septic smell, ensure that all smell (sink drains) traps have water in them. Run water for a few seconds weekly in all of your sinks, toilets, showers, bathtubs, hot water heater overflow drains, etc. Pour water into any floors drains weekly. When the water dries up, the gases in the waste water pipes flow back up the pipe and into your home. When the water is present, it blocks the gas. If your house smells like a sewer at random intervals, you have a smell trap that's dried up.

**Transformers**

Transformers come in a variety of sizes and are energy users. Transformers plug into the 220v outlet and allow one to use 110v appliances. Clocks and other timed devices may not properly function due to the difference in cycles. It is extremely important to know the watt rating of your transformers. Transformers typically rate 15W, 75W, 150W, 300W, 750W or 1000W. Check the watt rating on the appliance that you are plugging into the transformer to ensure it does not exceed that of the transformer. You should avoid plugging multiple appliances into one transformer as the total watt may exceed that of the transformer.

Only use transformers with a replaceable fuse and a switch on the power cord. Transformers use a lot of electricity as they continue to draw power even when the connected appliance is turned off. Transformers should be turned off and unplugged when not in use.

**Government Furniture**

Military personnel with an approved certificate of non-availability (CNA), to occupy private rental housing are authorized to receive furniture support.

DOD Civilians eligible to receive LQA (excluding contractors) living in private rental housing or in government quarters are entitled to furniture support.

- One wardrobe per family member
- Stove, refrigerator, washer, dryer, and dishwasher
- Loaner furniture

**Loaner sets**

Inbound personnel with full joint federal travel regulation weight allowance or elective joint federal travel regulations weight allowance who elect to ship their household good, are authorized loaner furniture for 90 days or until their household good arrive.

All outbound personnel are authorized loaner sets for 60 days.

Customers performing convenience moves are responsible for the transportation costs of/and any damage to government furniture and appliances incurred during a move. The costs for pick up and re-issue/installation of household appliances will also be the responsibility of the customer.

**SERVICES HSO CANNOT PROVIDE:**

**LEGAL ASSISTANCE:** Your servicing legal assistance office can provide you legal assistance and advise you on civil matter pertaining to Belgian Rental Law.

**SETTLING DISPUTES:** The HSO has no legal capability to commit either a landlord or a tenant in settling disputes. However, the HSO staff will mediate disputes through the negotiation process. If both parties cannot agree, the case will be referred to the Legal Assistance Office.

**FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS:** Under no circumstances will the HSO staff handle any monetary transactions for the tenant or the landlord. All financial transactions are the responsibility of the tenant and/or the landlord and will occur off US Government property. The HSO staff will not take possession of a rental property for a tenant or a landlord.

**ENTITLEMENTS:** HSO staff will provide you with a current copy of Overseas Housing Allowances (OHA) or Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) as a general guideline. Eligible personnel are encouraged to contact their finance or civilian personnel office as the best source of information.

**HOUSING DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS****EQUAL OPPORTUNITY in OFF-POST HOUSING PROGRAM (EOOPH)**

Title 42, U.S. Code, Section 3601, et seq (42 USC 3601 et seq) Public law 100-430 (1988), PL 93-383, (1974), PL 90-284 (1968) pertain to equal opportunity for all citizens in obtaining housing regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or familial status. These statutes are applicable in the United States. In foreign areas, the intent of the EOOPH program will be carried out to the extent possible within the laws and customs of the foreign country.

The program is intended to eliminate discrimination against DOD personnel on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, or familial status in obtaining suitable housing accommodation in local communities. A suspected discriminatory act, with or without the filing of a formal complaint is a valid basis for investigation.

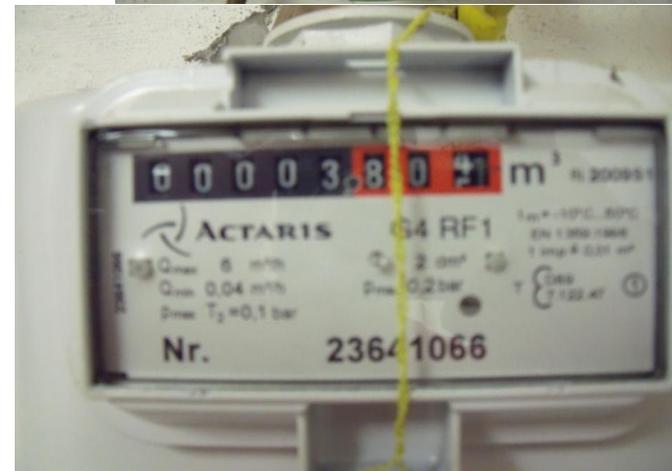
### Water Meter

This is what your water meter looks like, it can normally be found in the basement or garage.



### Gas Meter

This is what your gas meter looks like, it can be found in the basement or garage.



**Electric Meter**

This is what your electric meter can look like. There are different types of electric meters. Some are just day meters, others are day and night meters, while others are day, night and differential.

DAY METER – Identified by a symbol of the sun



NIGHT METER – Identified by a symbol of the moon

**Maintain your central heating system**

In order to optimize your central heating system, gas or fuel (mazout), it is very important that the followings items be checked once a month.

Water pressure of the furnace and radiators

If the water pressure is not correctly adjusted, you could have some cold radiators and the performance of the furnace will decrease.



This is a good pressure. The water pressure must be between 1 and 1.5 bars and maximum 2 bars when the system is hot.



To add water in the system, you will find 2 Shut off valves around the furnace, coming from a water line. Open first the valve of the water line and then the one going to the radiator/furnace lines. Be ready to shut off the valve as soon the pressure show 1.5 bars As soon as the pressure is OK, you have now to bleed your radiators. A very easy job! Doing this once a month will allow you to save around 20 % of the mazout or gas consumption, compared to a central heating system having air in the radiator pipes.

## Radiators



Open the thermostatic valve or regular valve at the maximum



unscrew, slowly, the bleeder and put your cup underneath to collect the water.  
As soon there is no more air

### HOW TO BLEED YOUR RADIATORS

As soon as the water pressure has been adjusted, prepare a screwdriver or a key to bleed radiators. Also have a cup or a bowl to collect the water dripping from the bleeder.

If there is not enough water dripping from the bleeder during the operation, you will have to add water again in the system.

Other items to be done while bleeding the radiators, is to open and close the thermostatic valves, 2 or 3 times to allow the rubber gaskets, inside the radiator valves, to work correctly.

## HELP ! I HAVE A WATER LEAK !

If for any reason, you should have a faucet leaking, the first thing is to shut off the "Schell" faucet.



Shut off valve "Schell" faucet underneath the bathroom sink cupboard



Shut off valve "Schell" faucet of the flush tank.

This will temporarily allow you to stop your dripping faucet or flush tank and avoid damages and/or high water consumption.