

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PREPAREDNESS TIPS

1. Evacuation Definitions

The primary distinction between the varied evacuation operations and modes of transportation to a safe haven lies in their voluntariness, urgency, and the degree of military involvement.

A Safe Haven is a temporary, designated location specified in an evacuation order where evacuated family members and non-essential personnel are directed to relocate. At this location, they wait for official decisions on whether they can safely return to their Permanent Duty Station (PDS) or if they must permanently relocate to a "Designated Place."

- Department of State (DOS) Travel Advisory or Voluntary Departure is a **voluntary/optional** safety measure allowing command-sponsored dependents and non-essential personnel to leave an OCONUS location, *but at their own expense*.
- Authorized Departure is a **voluntary/optional** safety measure allowing command-sponsored dependents and non-essential personnel to leave an OCONUS location **at government expense** using standard commercial travel. Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) Tracking System (NTS) is not used.
- Ordered Departure is a **mandatory** evacuation of sponsored dependents and non-essential personnel to leave an OCONUS location **at government expense** using standard commercial travel and chartered assets. NTS is used.
- NEO is a **mandatory**, rapid evacuation directed by the DOS and executed with Department of War (DOW) assistance to extract all U.S. citizens and designated personnel from an active or imminent threat environment using military or chartered assets. NTS is used.

Considerations:

- It is often highly recommended to take advantage of voluntary departure early to avoid emergency military extraction.
- Allowances & Reimbursements: While Authorized and Ordered Departures are government-funded, the financial administration and tracking (such as Joint Travel Regulation allowances) differ significantly during active combatant operations versus standard commercial relocations.
- Ensure all "go-bags" and command sponsorship paperwork are kept up to date.

2. The Evacuation Spectrum

How an Ordered Departure fits into the overall OCONUS safety framework:

Phase	Type	Nature	Transport	DOW Military Presence	NTS
Phase 1	Authorized Departure	Voluntary	Commercial	None (Administrative only)	No
Phase 2	Ordered Departure	Mandatory	Commercial / Charter	Minimal (Coordination only)	Yes
Phase 3	NEO	Mandatory/ Emergency	Military / Tactical	High (Active defense & logistics)	Yes

Note: As security environments can degrade instantly and risk conditions can escalate rapidly, be prepared to assume a more urgent, higher-risk Departure Type at any time.

3. Key Features of an Ordered Departure

- **Mandatory Action:** Unlike an Authorized Departure, personnel designated by the Chief of Mission or the Combatant Commander must depart the OCONUS area. Refusal to depart can result in administrative or disciplinary action.
- **Target Audience:** Civilian employees, federal contractors, and command-sponsored dependents of both military and civilian personnel.
- **Transportation:** Evacuation is still generally carried out via commercial flights, contracted charters, or scheduled military flights, rather than the tactical military transport typical of a NEO.
- **Safe Haven Allowances:** Evacuees are ordered to a designated safe haven (often the United States or a specific intermediate safe location) and receive temporary lodging, subsistence, and travel allowances under the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR).
- **Loss of Command Sponsorship Benefits:** Remaining behind during an Ordered Departure without an official waiver is a serious policy violation and can result in the loss of command sponsorship, housing allowances, and access to base installations.

4. Entitlements

During an Ordered Departure from an OCONUS location, eligible personnel and command-sponsored dependents receive Safe Haven Allowances as prescribed by the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) and the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR). These allowances cover the transportation to the safe haven, as well as temporary lodging and daily subsistence (Meals & Incidental Expenses) for up to 180 days.

Core Safe Haven Allowances (JTR Chapter 6)

When directed to evacuate to a safe haven (typically back in the United States or an intermediate location), families are supported through specific allowances:

Transportation & En Route Per Diem

- **Travel Costs:** The government covers the cost of commercial airfare or military airlift to the designated safe haven.
- **Travel Per Diem:** Dependents and non-essential civilian employees receive per diem for the travel days at 75% of the standard Meals & Incidental Expenses (M&IE) rate.

Subsistence & Lodging at Safe Haven (Up to 180 Days)

Once at the safe haven, evacuees receive a locality-based per diem to cover temporary commercial lodging and daily living expenses. The rates decrease over time:

Duration at Safe Haven	Evacuees 12 Years of Age or Older	Evacuees Under 12 Years of Age
First 30 Days	Up to 100% of the locality per diem rate.	Up to 50% of the locality per diem rate.
Days 31 to 180	Up to 60% of the locality per diem rate.	Up to 30% of the locality per diem rate

Note: Lodging reimbursement requires receipts and is generally only paid for commercial lodging. If a dependent stays with family or friends without verifiable host-incurred costs, lodging allowances are typically not authorized, though M&IE continues.

5. Additional Financial Impacts

- **Local Travel Allowance (Military Dependents only):** If a dependent cannot drive a Personally Owned Vehicle (POV) to the safe haven, they are authorized a flat local

travel allowance of \$25 per day per family to offset transportation costs like taxis or rental cars.

- Pet Transportation: The government authorizes transportation and quarantine fee reimbursement for up to two household pets (cats or dogs) to the safe haven.
 - Post Allowance & OCOLA Changes:
 - Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (OCOLA) drops (typically reduced starting on the 31st day away).
 - Post Differential and Post Allowance generally terminate based on time away from the post.
 - Living Quarters Allowance (LQA): Civilian employees typically continue to receive their LQA because they cannot practically terminate their foreign leases on short notice during an emergency.
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Common Pitfalls

- Early Return of Dependents (ERD) Conversion: If the threat persists, an Ordered Departure may transition into an official Early Return of Dependents (ERD). When an ERD is approved, safe haven (TDY-style) allowances *stop*, and the move transitions to a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) entitlement focused on a single designated place in CONUS.
 - Shipping Vehicles and Goods: Shipment of a POV or full Household Goods (HHG) is not authorized under Ordered Departure. Only accompanied baggage and specific comfort/essential items can go with the evacuee.
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6. Travel Expenses and Travel Vouchers

Military families recoup travel and living expenses during an authorized departure by filing a travel claim with receipts through their sponsor's command or local finance office. Families are typically reimbursed for lodging, authorized transportation, and daily meals and incidental expense (M&IE) per diem rate.

Eligible Expenses:

- Transportation: Commercial flights or mileage for personal vehicles traveling to the designated safe haven.
- Lodging: Covered for up to 180 days. Keep and submit all commercial lodging receipts.

- Per Diem (M&IE): For the first 30 days, dependents aged 12 and older receive 100% of the local safe haven per diem rate, while those under 12 receive 50%.
- From days 31 to 180, rates typically drop to 60% and 30%.

How to File:

Submitted every 30 Days: Travel claims for per diem and lodging must be submitted by the sponsor. It is standard to submit the claim and receipts every 30 days while at the safe haven.

Advance Payments: In some circumstances or evacuations, families may be authorized an advance payment to cover immediate out-of-pocket travel and subsistence costs. The advance will be deducted from future claims.

Special Allowances:

- Pet Expenses: Transportation, quarantine, and required medical treatments for pets can be reimbursed up to a capped limit per household (often around \$2,000).
- Local Travel: A daily allowance (often \$25/day per family) may be authorized to offset costs if the family does not have a vehicle at the safe haven location.

Required Documents:

- Evacuation orders
- Command Sponsorship (PCS Orders, Letter of Employment listing command sponsored family members)
- DD 1351-2 Travel Claim form, to be filed with CPPA (mil), DFAS (civ)
- Receipts

Official Resources:

Refer to the Defense Travel Management Office Evacuation Allowances for a comprehensive breakdown of the Department of War (DoW) policies. Find the applicable daily rates for the selected designated safe haven using the Defense Travel Management Office Per Diem Calculator.

DFAS FAQs for Evacuees

<https://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/travelpay/evacuations/>

The Joint Travel Regulations Chapter 6, which can be found at

https://www.travel.dod.mil/Policy-Regulations/Joint_Travel-Regulations/

Per Diem Rates are available at <https://www.travel.dod.mil/>

For civilian employees and their civilian dependents, see the DOS Standardized Regulations Chapter 600, found at <https://allowances.state.gov/content.asp>

7. NEO Kit (Go-bags)

A NEO Kit is a pre-packed emergency "go-bag" and document packet. It ensures families can evacuate swiftly during crises abroad. It contains a physical bag of survival supplies and a waterproof packet of vital paperwork.

The NEO Packet:

This contains hard copies of identification, medical, and financial records necessary for evacuation, border crossings, and repatriation. It should be kept in a waterproof folder and include:

- Passports, Military IDs, and Social Security cards
- Emergency Evacuation Program (EEP) packet, appropriately filled out
- Birth, marriage, and adoption certificates
- Record of Emergency Data (e.g., DD Form 93) and a Family Care Plan
- Wills and Special Powers of Attorney (for signing official documents, managing vehicles, leases)
- Medical and immunization records (including International Certificates of Vaccination)
- Vehicle titles and insurance policies
- Change of address card

NEO Kit supplies:

Evacuees are usually restricted to 66 pounds of luggage per person and must be able to carry it long distances over stairs and in crowds. The kit should include a 3-day supply of:

- Food & Water: Non-perishable, high-energy, lightweight food (and a manual can opener). Bottled water (at least 1 liter per person per day)
- Medications: A minimum 30-day supply of all required prescription medications
- Personal Care: Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, feminine hygiene products, and toilet paper
- Baby/Pet Supplies: 3 days' worth of diapers, wipes, formula, and baby food
- Pet records, carriers, leashes, and food
- Survival Gear: A small flashlight with extra batteries, 3 days' worth of seasonal clothing and undergarments, working uniform, blankets, sturdy walking shoes, poncho or raincoat, battery charger and chords
- Financials: At least \$100 US in cash (small bills) and some local currency