



News for U.S. Military Widows in Korea

Green Card and Income Tax

Normally, widows who are not U.S. citizens and who are living in Korea do not have to pay U.S. income tax. There is an agreement between the U.S. and Korea that defines what income is taxable and what is not taxable. For example, widows who are non-resident aliens receiving Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or the civil service (OPM) annuity do not have to pay tax if they. If they are resident aliens, that is, living in the U.S., they must pay tax on these benefits.

If you have a Green Card, you are considered a resident alien and you must pay U.S. income tax on SBP and OPM benefits just as if you were living in the U.S.

For Social Security benefits, tax is withheld for all non-citizens who live outside the U.S. and this tax is not refundable.

Car Registration

Some widows have continued to drive their SOFA-registered car long after their husband's death. This is illegal, and could result in severe penalties by the Korean government, the U.S. military, or both, if you are caught. The SOFA registration is valid only as long as the registered owner of the car works in a job that provides SOFA status. In the case where the registered owner dies, the SOFA registration is no longer valid and the car must be either sold to an authorized individual with SOFA status, or de-registered (SOFA plates turned in) and sold or re-registered with Korean license plates.

The only case where a widow can continue to drive a car with SOFA plates is if the widow works for the U.S. government in a job that grants SOFA status and the job is in a grade high enough to be allowed SOFA vehicle registration.

USAF Thunderbirds Coming to Korea

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds will be in Korea later this year as part of the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Korean War. The exact schedule is not firm, but early planning has them at Osan Air Base in September for an airshow as part of Osan's Airpower Day. They will visit other countries in Asia, and return for an airshow at Seoul (K-16) Air Base in October.

The final schedule will be included in the next issue of this newsletter in June.

Keep Your Address Updated

If your mailing address changes, it's very important that you notify the agencies providing benefits. If you do not notify them of an address change, it's very possible that your benefits will stop if they cannot contact you. The RAO can assist you in providing updates to all these agencies.

It's especially important if you decide to move to the U.S. that you contact the RAO so that your benefits will continue without interruption, and that the agencies providing benefits know how to contact you in the U.S.

Medical Care for People Under Age 65

If you require treatment at a Korean hospital, you can only be reimbursed if you are recommended by a doctor at a military hospital. With a referral to a civilian hospital, you will be reimbursed for 75% of your costs after meeting a \$300 annual deductible.

Medical Care for People Age 65 and Over

Up to now, once you reach age 65 you are no longer eligible to be reimbursed for treatment at a civilian hospital, even if you are referred by a doctor at a military hospital. That will change on October 1, 2001. A new program, called TRICARE-for-Life, will start on that date and you will be able to continue to receive reimbursement the same as for those under age 65.

The only requirement is that you must be enrolled in Social Security Medicare Part B. This is medical insurance that costs \$50 per month. Medicare treatment is available only for people living in the U.S. However, it will be used to pay for TRICARE for people 65 and over for people living outside the U.S. Even if you do not receive Social Security benefits, you must be enrolled in Medicare Part B to be eligible for TRICARE-for-Life, and you must be enrolled no later than March 31, 2001. Enrolling by that date provides Medicare coverage starting July 1, 2001 and it will then provide TRICARE coverage starting October 1, 2001. If you are 65 or older and do not enroll in Medicare Part B by March 31, you must wait until the next enrollment period, which will be January 1 to March 31, 2002.

RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE
51 MSS/CVR
UNIT 2097
APO AP 96278-2097

MPS