

Advance Guidance for
2014 Overseas Housing Allowance Utility/Recurring Maintenance Survey
Puerto Rico

The Overseas Housing Allowance Utility and Recurring Maintenance 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 14 May to 13 June 2014 for Puerto Rico. 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:

- Be stationed in the country where this survey is being conducted for six or more months
- Reside in privately leased quarters (not a homeowner or home 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 each of your utilities and the average monthly cost of any routine maintenance expenses you incurred over the last 12 months.

Web Link

You may take the survey at the following web link. This web link will be activated on the survey start date of 14 May. The deadline to complete the survey is close of business (COB) 13 June 2014.

<https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/oha-util-may.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 utility rates. We ask that you make every effort to take the survey and report your expenses accurately.

Participating in the Survey

The electronic survey takes approximately 35 minutes to complete and should be completed by you or your spouse, whoever has knowledge of utility and recurring maintenance expenses. If you are able to access this survey from home, it is recommended that you take the survey together.

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. To assist you with preparing for the survey, a worksheet is included as the last page of this document. In addition, there will a special section of the survey for combined utilities when only one bill is received, such as a bill that combines cost for water and sewage.

You may save the survey, obtain additional information, and resume the survey at any time during the survey timeframe. Directions on how to do “save” and “resume” are included in the survey. 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 eligible for utility payments.

Only government personnel (no outside contractors) will analyze the data from the survey. 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 trash on the same bill), there is no need to separate this costs as there is a special survey section dedicated to combined utility bills.

Sales tax: Only include sales tax if it was paid but you were not reimbursed.

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 for information that might help us better understand your data. Be sure to add any additional utility or recurring maintenance that you paid but was not included in the survey. Remember, collection of the actual amount you pay in rent is not part of this survey. For other costs not part of this survey, see the chart above.

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

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 ○ Liquid petroleum gas (LPG or “Bombola”) ○ Fuel oil ○ Coal ○ Firewood • Water for residence • Bottled water for drinking • Trash pickup • Sewer charges • 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. • 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 • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable TV • Monthly internet charges • Tuition • Monthly 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 Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC))

To help you prepare for the survey, a work sheet has been provided on page 4 for determining your average monthly utility/recurring maintenance expenses.

Overseas Housing Allowance Utility/Recurring Maintenance Survey Worksheet

To prepare for the survey, gather your bills, receipts, and records of utility/recurring maintenance expenses and calculate the average monthly cost for each expense using the worksheet below.

To calculate average monthly cost:

- a. Determine annual cost for each utility by adding quarterly and/or monthly bills and annual catch-up bills (if incurred) together.
- b. Divide annual cost for each utility by the number of months you have been at this permanent duty station, up to 12 months, to get your average monthly cost.

(v) if incurred	Utility	Average Monthly Cost <i>(in Currency Paid)</i>
	Electricity	
	Heating Fuels	
	o Natural gas	
	o Liquid petroleum gas (LPG or “Bombola”)	
	o Fuel oil	
	o Coal	
	o Firewood	
	Water for residence	
	Bottled water for drinking	
	Trash pickup	
	Sewer charges	
	Maintenance and minor repairs <i>(i.e., replacement of a window pane, repair of an electrical outlet, etc.)</i>	
	Renter’s insurance <i>(Only include if insurance is required by lease or law, related to the physical dwelling, and identified by type of insurance. Examples are insurance expenses for water or fire damage to residence, comprehensive and/or liability insurance. Insurance expenses for your personal property should not be included.)</i>	
	Condo fees <i>(Only include if not rolled-up into rent or reimbursed as part of OHA rental allowance.)</i>	
	Recurring expenses such as, monthly monitoring fee for alarm system <i>(Only include if not included in the rent and reimbursed as part of OHA rental allowance.)</i>	
	Police protection and/or Guards	
	Taxes for which the tenant is responsible, <i>(Only include if you make a separately identifiable payment, and taxes are tied to the physical dwelling. For France, this includes Habitation Taxes, if paid.)</i>	
	Combined utilities <i>(Include type)</i>	