

470TH AIR BASE SQUADRON HOUSING REFERRAL OFFICE

INPROCESSING COUNSELING CHECKLIST

1. Service member (SM) provides five copies of PCS-orders with departure date, date of arrival, which dependents are with SM in hotel, duty section and extension, temporary location (hotel or guesthouse).
2. TLA procedures: Hand out copy of TLA Info Letter; TLA in 10 day increments, SM proofs aggressive seek of housing by "TLA Validation Sheet", (1. week=2 dwellings, 2. week=5 dwellings). SM provides receipts from hotel or other temporary accommodation, max. 30 days TLA, transfer of TLA form to Account.&Finance NLT two days after turn-in of receipt.
SM should not forget to pay hotel/ guesthouse bill!!
3. Sources for house hunting: USAF Housing Referral Office (HRO), NATO Billeting (Bldg. 141), Schinnen Housing Office in The Netherlands, and JFC HQ in Brunssum/NL, local GK newspaper. Don't use a realtor, neither on base nor off base, otherwise you would end with paying a realtor's fee, which could amount up to 1,5 months rent equivalent.
4. If SM has school kids, has to make sure the future place of residence is within the school-bus area. The student transportation office in Brunssum/NL has to be contacted for information. If the SM lives outside the school-bus area, he/she is responsible for transportation to the next possible bus stop.
5. Wish to reside in the Netherlands? SM has to pick up "Certificate of Understanding of Residence in The Netherlands" (USAG Benelux Form 600-3A-E) at the commander support staff (CSS) in bldg. 88, customer service section, and get it completed, then return one copy to HRO, one to Schinnen housing.
6. Explanation of rental contract terms such as size, cold rent, utilities(landlord's property insurance should always be added, to avoid tenant paying for water damage caused by washer – recourse/regress), impact to housing allowance, renovation requirements, final bills, lease termination, security deposit.
7. HRO will contact landlords, if necessary, and negotiate contractual stipulations with tenant and landlord. When SM has selected a residence, he/she has to pick-up a worksheet for a lease contract from HRO and let the landlord complete it.
Don't sign it! The worksheet (aka pre-contract) then will be returned to the HRO and checked. HRO will prepare the USAF lease contract. The contract can be picked-up three to five days later. Don't carry the lease around. Bring lease to landlord for signature within the next three days.
8. Don't tell a prospective landlord, what your OHA ceiling is. Landlords don't have to know, it might give them ideas to raise the rent. The average rent per m² is around € 7 in the GK area.
9. The SM should not sign a lease contract before HRO has checked the rental stipulations!!
10. Only USAFE Form 291a leases will be accepted. For housing allowance purposes the 470th finance office will provide the contract to the AF Finance Center in Ellsworth, SD, and the employees there don't have German language skills.
11. Only the two USAF housing employees are the official POCs for housing matters, nobody else. There are always individuals and private agencies trying to make money by taking US personnel to housing visits using the our housing list and trying to make arrangements with landlords to increase the rent. You should not make any deals with them. Some agencies are also offering contracts for utility set-up/cancellation services for a monthly fee. In case of utility problems, SM has to deal with them. Keep in mind: Housing office services are free for landlords and tenants.
12. Before the SM agrees to an effective date on the lease contract, TMO should be contacted to find out, if household goods can be delivered in time. If not, loaner furniture from Schinnen will be available. If necessary, the effective date of the lease has to be changed in coordination with the landlord.
13. The Housing Supply Office (CFMO) is located in Schinnen, The Netherlands. This is the point of contact if the SM needs loaner furniture and appliances. (Tel. 0031/46443-7455, Bldg. 18).

14. Upon moving in the SM will inspect the rental unit with the landlord. The use of the inspection checklist (USAFE Form 333a) for the documentation of the condition of the rental unit is recommended. SM provides one copy of the checklist to be filed in the SM's folder at the HRO and keeps a copy of the checklist with the lease, it will be needed when final inspection is done.

15. The SM should read the water and electric meter and note the readings on the condition checklist. That makes it easier to verify information on the landlord's/utility company's annual utility reconciliation bill.

16. The SM should sign a German Private Liability Insurance. If there are incident related damages to the rental property during the tenancy, this is the tool to avoid the financial burden of repair cost. Check your current insurance policy about what is covered and what should be added.

17. When the lease contract is signed, the SM should provide the new address of residence to TMO in Schinnen.

18. To start electricity, the SM reads the meter at his/her residence and takes it (with the meter number) to New Energie company in Geilenkirchen, Nikolaus-Becker-Str. 28-34. The sponsor can assist the SM. Only New Energy provides tax-free electricity based on a contract with NATO, other providers do not! Give NEW your local bank data in their contract. They will withdraw the appropriate amount from your account every month.

19. If the rental unit is heated with natural gas, the SM reads the gas meter and brings reading and meter number to the NAF/Tax Services Office in building 87, room 21. There he/she can enroll in the Utility Tax Relief Program, if the provider is EWV. Give EWV your local bank data as requested in their contract after you have received it. If it is an oil heating system, the SM has to purchase the oil from a local dealer (for tax exemption see US Tax Office). The US Tax Office/AFRC have infos about local oil companies.

20. Do not look for rental dwellings with a propane gas heating system! The tenant is obligated to pay VAT on propane.

21. Telephone service and internet: The SM should sign a contract with a provider, who accepts a monthly termination of this contract. The SM has to keep in mind if the contract is changed because of new features or with a different company, it starts from zero again. The SOFA contains no clause to protect the SM in this matter. (TKS, Telekom, Arcor, 1&1, etc.)

22. After the delivery of household goods and furniture the SM has to check the dwelling, if the moving company has caused any damages. Right then it has to be addressed to the movers; pictures would be a good help. **The SM is responsible to the landlord for damages, not the moving company**, so the SM has to get in contact with the movers immediately to claim the damage.

23. Upon the effective date of the lease contract, the SM returns to HRO to start the Overseas Housing Allowance(OHA) and Moving In Housing Allowance(MIHA). The SM signs the completed OHA/ MIHA form in two copies. Each Wednesday HRO will log and transmit the forms with a copy of the lease contract and PCS orders to the Finance Office. Finance will submit the information to the finance center. It's the SM's responsibility to assure payment of the rent to the landlord upon due date in advance, most suitable is a standing order payment. The first payment can be prorated.

24. Payments of rent, electricity, gas and telephone are possible through Community Bank in Schinnen/NL, Commerzbank (Bldg. 81, Tel. commercial 68085), or any other local German bank. The SM has to set up an account and has to deposit a sufficient amount of money every month to guarantee the monthly electronic transfers, if at a German bank. Also it is the SM's obligation to control, if the various monthly payments have been transferred. Check this every month!

25. HRO provides updated and available rentals in a binder located in the Housing Office. The SM's sponsor will arrange the transportation. GPS systems are available at the AFRC for house hunting purposes. Local maps can be bought at a gas station or at the book-store downtown Geilenkirchen. The SM should check dwellings available within the 30-day TLA window only. If not, TLA cannot be granted beyond the 30 days.

(POC: USAF Housing Referral Office, Bldg. 87, Room 4, Tel. (02451-63-) 2224)

(Date, Rank, Name, Signature)

470ABS/HRO