

## Choosing Your Safehaven: Factors to Consider

In an evacuation situation, family members may choose as a safehaven any point in the continental United States (CONUS). They do not necessarily have to choose their home leave address. When deciding on a safehaven location, family members may want to consider the following options and the pros and cons of each.

- **The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Area:** If the employee is evacuated, she or he must report for duty at the agency headquarters, usually Washington, D.C. In this case, family members may wish to choose Washington as their safehaven point. Family members earlier evacuated to a U.S. or authorized foreign safehaven may be permitted to rejoin an employee subsequently evacuated and reporting to duty in Washington, D.C. Being in Washington has certain advantages, including being able to come into the State Department for briefings organized by the Family Liaison Office (FLO), at the Overseas Briefing Center, and having the resources of the Department near at hand. If a group of evacuees is located in the Washington area, they have the opportunity to enjoy mutual support, and an evacuee may feel a little more in touch with the situation at post.
- **Other Locations in CONUS:** Often the most important factor for evacuees in making the safehaven decision is where their network of support is located. If family and friends are located on the other side of the country from Washington, that may well be the best safehaven for the evacuee. If the employee did not return to the U.S. on evacuation status, it may be even more important to be near a source of family support, particularly if there are small children involved. Although FLO makes every effort to keep in contact with all evacuees wherever they are located, those located farther from Washington have less access to certain resources. However, this is often less important to evacuees than the support of family, friends and hometown.
- **Foreign Safehaven:** The official safe haven for evacuated families is CONUS. However, some family members do not have particular ties to the U.S. and would prefer to choose a foreign location. The post may request a foreign safe haven for a family member from the Department of State. If the request is approved, the evacuee will receive a Subsistence Expense Allowance based on the lower of the following: the locality to which s/he is evacuated or the standard CONUS rate. If the request was not approved, the evacuee cannot officially travel to or receive evacuation benefits in a foreign location. It is important to note that Hawaii and Alaska are considered foreign safe havens, as they are not part of CONUS.
- **Changing Locations:** Once the evacuee has arrived at the safehaven location, he or she will not be funded for travel to another location during the period of the evacuation. Sometimes family members wish to move from one location to another during the evacuation. While doing so will not affect Subsistence Expense Allowance payments, the evacuee would be responsible for paying for the travel involved.