



Retiree Activities Office

Yokota AB, Japan



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Newsletter

Nov - Dec 2015

A publication of the Yokota Retiree Activities Office (RAO) whose mission is to support the base Commander in providing information and assistance to military retirees, their family members, and surviving spouses residing in the Tokyo Metropolitan area, and surrounding prefectures. Articles appearing in this newsletter are compiled from local sources; newsletters received by the RAO, and U.S. government sources. Information has been edited and reprinted for the benefit of our retiree population. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information herein, no absolute guarantee of accuracy or currency can be given nor should be assumed.

Income Tax Season is just around the corner: Before we know it, the annual income tax filing season will be here. The Yokota Legal Office once again is planning to open a Tax Center offering free tax preparation and electronic filing of income tax returns to active duty members, civilian employees, military retirees and widows. Additional information as to opening dates, hours of operation and how to make an appointment will be forthcoming through various public information sources. Our next RAO newsletter should also have all the information you need to schedule an appointment. As a reminder, the Tax Center is 100% manned by volunteers, and will be looking for folks who would like to volunteer to become income tax preparers. An IRS representative will be coming to Yokota in January to conduct a training seminar for volunteers.

No Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2016: The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently announced that Federal and military retirees, as well as disabled veterans would not receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2016. There will be no benefit increase largely due to low gas prices. The COLA, which is determined by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), measures price changes in food, housing, gas and other goods and services. This is only the third time in 40 years that there hasn't been a COLA.

Many federal retirees will feel the pinch of no COLA because of a jump in Medicare Part B premiums, which are estimated to increase by more than 50 percent next year. However, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "approximately 70 percent of beneficiaries are expected not to see a premium increase in 2016."

Will Your Medicare Premiums Rise? One in seven Medicare beneficiaries will see their Part B premiums increase by an unprecedented 52 percent next year; by far the largest hike in Medicare's history, unless the government intervenes somehow to soften the blow.

About 7 in 10 beneficiaries have their premiums automatically deducted from their Social Security checks. And under a “hold-harmless” provision of the law, a zero Social Security COLA in any year means that those people cannot pay more in standard Part B premiums than in the previous year.

While the vast majority of beneficiaries are expected to pay the same Part B premium in 2016 as this year; \$104.90 a month, certain groups of people will experience a dramatic rise, to \$159.30 a month or even higher, due to an obscure part of the Medicare law that ties the cost of living allowance (COLA) in Social Security benefits to Part B premiums.

If, as expected (see previous article), there is no Social Security increase next year, most recipients who collect both Medicare and Social Security will also see no increase in their Medicare Part B premiums. That will shift the burden of paying for increased costs to those Medicare recipients who do not collect Social Security, higher-income recipients and those new to the program.

This checklist should help explain your particular situation

1. If you pay standard Part B premiums of \$104.90 each month, and have them deducted from your Social Security checks: You will not see an increase.
2. If you now pay higher Part B premiums: You will see an increase.
3. You are enrolled in Part B but pay your premiums directly to Medicare: You will see an increase because your premiums are not deducted from Social Security benefits.
4. You pay permanent penalties because you signed up late for Part B: Yes, you will pay more than you do now.
5. You are not yet enrolled in Part B but will sign up in 2016: Yes, you will pay more since you are new to the program.

Veterans Day Ceremony Reminder: The Yokota AB 374th Airlift Wing will be hosting a Veteran's Day Ceremony at the Wing Headquarters building 315 flag pole on 11 November 2015 starting at 1045. As part of the ceremonies, local VFW Post 9555 will be doing a three-flower ceremony as a way to show respect for all veterans, past and present. All retirees and their families are invited to join us on the 11th to celebrate this historic day.

Japan Implements the “My Number System”: The My Number law took effect in early October to allocate 12-digit identification numbers to everybody with a resident registry in Japan, including foreign nationals, to enable tax and other authorities to discover tax evasion and wrongful receipt of welfare benefits more easily while simplifying administrative procedures for residents.

Your city of residence will notify all citizens, including foreigners registered as residents in Japan and have an address in the city, of their 12-digit number. The notice in the form of a paper card that has your name, date of birth, sex and the number will be sent by registered mail between mid

October and the end of November. You will be requested to use this number starting January 1, 2016 and after for procedures related to pension, health insurance, taxation, unemployment insurance, opening bank accounts, etc., (Much like the SSN used in the USA). Along with the paper card, you will receive an application form for an optional free of charge IC-embedded Individual Number Card. To apply for an IC card, complete and send back the enclosed application form, attaching your photo (to be used on the IC card). On January 1, 2016 or later you will receive a notice of issuance that your IC card is ready for issuance. You can receive the IC card at the city municipal office where you live, by presenting the following three items:

1. Your paper card
2. Notification of issuance
3. Personal ID (driver's license, passport, residence card, etc.)

374th Medical Group Closures in November: The following is a list of dates that the medical clinics will be closed during the month of November. Please plan accordingly.

3-5 Nov – Exercise: Closed all day

11 Nov – Veterans Day: Closed all day

12 Nov – Family Day: Closed all day

20 Nov – Wingman Day: Closed all day

26 Nov – Thanksgiving, Closed all day

27 Nov – Family Day: Closed all day

The Inpatient Unit, Urgent Care, and Dental Clinic will remain open for urgent issues.

Contacting the RAO:

We are located on Friendship Blvd. in building 445, 1st floor

By phone from (DSN): 225-8324

By Phone from off-base (042) 552-2510 extension 58324

Voice mail 24 hours a day

Email: yokota.rao@us.af.mil

Operating hours: 0900-1200 Monday, Thursday, Friday, and 0900-1500 Tuesday and Wednesday.

Don't forget to check out the RAO on Facebook for the latest items of interest to the retiree community. Your comments are always encouraged and appreciated.