



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 71

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Affordable Care Act

Leaving China?

Did you know that you can end your enrollment with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) by visiting the step.state.gov site? If you previously submitted a paper enrollment form to the U.S. consulate, you may end your enrollment by sending an email request to: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

U.S. citizens living abroad are generally subject to the same individual shared responsibility provision as U.S. citizens living in the United States. Starting in 2014, the individual shared responsibility provision calls for each individual to have minimum essential coverage (MEC) for each month, qualify for an exemption, or make a payment when filing his or her federal income tax return. However, U.S. citizens or residents living abroad for at least 330 days within a 12 month period are treated as having MEC during those 12 months and thus will not owe a shared responsibility payment for any of those 12 months. Also, U.S. citizens who qualify as a bona fide resident of a foreign country for an entire taxable year are treated as having **MEC** for that year. For more information on the requirements of the Affordable Care Act, please visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/living_1234.html.

Schoolchildren Ordered Indoors As Air Pollution Cloaks Shanghai

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(From Associated Press, 12-6-2013)

Shanghai authorities ordered schoolchildren indoors and halted all construction on Friday as China's financial hub suffered one its worst bouts of air pollution, bringing visibility down to a few dozen meters and obscuring the city's spectacular skyline. The financial district was shrouded in a yellow haze and noticeably fewer people walked the city's streets. Vehicle traffic was thinner, as authorities pulled 30% of government vehicles from the roads. They also banned fireworks and stopped all public sporting events. Protective masks and air purifiers were selling briskly at local stores. "I feel like I'm living in clouds of smog," said Zheng Qiaoyun, a local resident who kept her 6-month-old son at home. "I have a headache, I'm coughing, and it's hard to breathe on my way to my office."

Shanghai's concentration of tiny, harmful PM 2.5 particles was 602.5 micrograms per cubic meter on Friday afternoon, an extremely hazardous level that was the highest since the city began recording such data last December. That compares

with the World Health Organization's safety guideline of 25 micrograms. The dirty air that has gripped Shanghai and its neighboring provinces for days is attributed to coal burning, car exhaust, factories and weather patterns, and is a stark reminder that pollution is a serious challenge in China.

Beijing, the capital, has seen extremely high smog several times over the past year. In the far northeastern city of Harbin, some monitoring sites reported PM 2.5 rates up to 1,000 micrograms per cubic meter in October, when the winter heating season kicked off. As a coastal city, Shanghai usually has mild to modest air pollution, but recent weather patterns have left the city's air stagnant. Factory emissions in the adjacent provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang are among China's worst, according to the environmental group Greenpeace. "Both Jiangsu and Zhejiang should act as soon as possible to set goals to reduce their coal consumption so that the Yantze River Delta will again be green with fresh air," Huang Wei, a Greenpeace project manager, said in a statement.

Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Warnings** for the following countries:

Honduras	12/24/2013
Republic of South Sudan	12/17/2013
Libya	12/12/2013
Venezuela	11/22/2013
Iran	11/21/2013

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist

American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Alerts**:

Egypt	12/18/2013
Madagascar	12/12/2013
Bangladesh	12/03/2013
Mali	11/21/2013

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural

disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and **prohibited items** on flights can be viewed online at www.tsa.gov.

For additional information, please visit "**Americans Traveling Abroad**" on the website of the U.S. Department of State http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html.

Upcoming Holidays & Other Closures

A full list of all of our closures is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>. The ACS Unit will be **CLOSED** to the public on:

<u>December 30, 2013, Monday</u>	Administrative Closure	行政管理日	Xíngzhèng Guǎnlǐ Rì
<u>January 1, 2014, Wednesday</u>	New Year's Day	元旦	Yuándàn
<u>January 20, 2014, Monday</u>	Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.	马丁·路德·金日	Mǎdīng·Lùdé·Jīn Rì

American Citizen Services (ACS) Contact Information

U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai, China, 1038 West Nanjing Road, 8/F
Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场 (Méi Lóng Zhèn Guǎng Chǎng)

To Make Or Cancel An Appointment:

<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=SHG&appcode=1>

Mon - Fri *Closed on Wednesday afternoons, weekends, and holidays.

After Hours Emergencies: (86-21) 3217-4650

Homepage: shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html

The World's Most Expensive Cities For Expats: China's Results Might Surprise You

(From the website of ECA International)

Beijing is now Asia's second most expensive location for international assignees, up from 5th position last year. Shanghai is in 18th position in the global results, and 4th in Asia.

This is among the findings of the latest Cost of Living survey by ECA International. While Tokyo still tops the list of the most expensive locations in Asia for expatriates, globally it has fallen to 10th place on the back of a weaker Yen – a significant drop from last year, when it was the most expensive city in the world for expatriate staff. Companies that

need to assign staff to Japan can now do so for considerably less than in recent years, despite the country's long period of deflation being reversed earlier this year.

Globally, Beijing is the 15th most expensive location for expatriates. Hong Kong, in 28th place globally and 8th in Asia, is Greater China's third most expensive city.

"Although the Chinese government has allowed the Renminbi to appreciate steadily against the US dollar and food and oil prices in China have been rising, Beijing's jump up the ranking is largely due to Japanese locations becoming so much

cheaper because of the weaker Yen," said Lee Quane, Regional Director – Asia, ECA International. "Nevertheless, living costs in Chinese locations have increased in recent years, making China a more expensive location than some of its neighbors for companies looking to set up operations in the region." "Hong Kong's position – up one place in the Asian ranking and four positions globally – has remained relatively stable. As in many parts of the world, inflation here has slowed over the past year while the Hong Kong dollar has not appreciated against the major currencies to a greater extent than other currencies in the region."

Tax News: Statement of Specified Foreign Financial Assets

The Internal Revenue Service would like to remind U.S. taxpayers that they may need to file Form 8938 (Statement of Specified Foreign Financial Assets). It is important for taxpayers to determine whether they are subject to this requirement because the law imposes significant penalties for failing to comply.

More information is available on the IRS tax site, specifically at [Summary of Key FATCA Provisions](#).

Bird Flu Outbreak At Hebei Poultry Farm Confirmed As H5N2

(By Eric Baculinao, NBC News Producer, 12-23-2013)

An outbreak of H5N2 bird flu has been reported in poultry north China's Hebei Province, the country's Ministry of Agriculture announced Saturday, according to state news agency, Xinhua.

The disease has killed 4,000 chickens at a farm in Baoding City since they first displayed symptoms of the suspected avian flu on Dec. 17, the ministry said.

The National Avian Influenza Reference Laboratory confirmed the cause of the outbreak was H5N2 bird flu after testing samples collected at the farm. Authorities have sealed off and sterilized the infected area, where a total of 125,700 chickens have been culled and safely disposed of to prevent the outbreak from spreading.

Bird flu, or avian influenza, is a contagious disease of animal origin caused by viruses that normally infect only birds and, less commonly, pigs. It can be fatal to humans.