



USAG ITALY

Housing Information For Incoming Personnel

USAG Italy Housing Office
Directorate of Public Works, Housing Division





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON VICENZA
UNIT 31401, BOX 41
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AMIM-ITP-H

MEMORANDUM FOR Incoming Military Personnel assigned to the area serviced by USAG Italy Housing Division

SUBJECT: Housing Information for New Arrivals to Vicenza

I. All personnel **must** in-process with the USAG Italy Housing Division prior to seeking Private Rental Housing. This is not only a requirement but it is also for their protection and benefit. This will allow them to be fully briefed on the following prior to signing any rental contracts or agreements and also give them the opportunity to start viewing available properties.

- a. Local rental market and availability.
- b. Italian Rental Laws and registration of contract.
- c. What is normally included in a lease agreement
- d. Agency fees: reimbursement is authorized.
- e. Free Taxi-Interpreter service through the Housing Office.
- f. Government Furnishings support (CFMO)
- g. Utilities, types of heating system and garbage collection.
- h. How to search for available Housing on the automated referral system HOMES.mil.

2. It is the responsibility of the Housing Division to ensure personnel are housed as quickly as possible in the best housing available that is suitable, affordable and meets their requirements. The best way to do this is to ensure our customers are fully prepared for this experience and have an understanding of the process to preclude them entering into binding agreements without being fully aware of the consequences.

3. Recently we have seen an increase in complaints and problems customers have encountered, when entering into lease agreements with private rental agencies without **first** in-processing with our Office. Some of the most commonly identified problems are listed below:

a. **NON-REDUNDABLE FEE:** Some agencies are now requiring that potential clients to pay a non-refundable "Proposal Fee". This pre-lease agreement is usually written in Italian only. Newly arrived personnel should be advised that they should never pay a fee up front and never sign anything written in Italian only.

b. **MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT:** Customers need to know who will be the responsible point of contact for maintenance and financial issues once the lease contract is signed. Often the agency does all the up-front negotiation with the customer but doesn't provide management services resulting in the Tenant being frustrated about who to contact for assistance if it is not specifically stated in the contract.

c. **HIGH SECURITY DEPOSITS:** Some agencies are requiring up to three months of rent for the security deposit. While this is allowed by Italian rental Laws, the normal rate for properties listed with the Housing Division is the equivalent of one month's rent.

d. **RENTAL CONTRACTS:** Customers need to be advised that they should insist that the Housing Office bi-lingual contract be utilized, even if dealing with a Real Estate Agency. Failure to do so may result in the Housing Office not being able to assist the client should any issues arise due to the legalities of the contract. For example if the "Military clause", which allows for early termination of the contract, is not clearly stipulated the occupant may be faced with up to six months of additional rent when the contract is terminated. If a customer signs a contract other than the Housing Office contract, their only recourse will be through the JAG Office to resolve contractual disputes.

e. **EARLY OCCUPANCY:** Agencies sometimes pressure customers for an early effective date of the rental contract. By doing this, the customer may not have sufficient time to get utilities activated, appliances and loaner furniture delivered.

f. **CENTRALIZED HEATING SYSTEMS:** Some properties offered by Real Estate Agencies have a centralized heating system. This type of heating system cannot be individually controlled and heat is only available during certain hours of the day and night. These systems are also usually not eligible for the tax free benefits offered by the Tax Relief Office as they are "shared" with Local Nationals.

g. **OTHER ISSUES:** Other problems that customers report when dealing with a Real Estate Agency include language barrier, inaccessibility, and poor response time.

h. **WEB SITES:** Several agencies have web sites and personnel sometimes make arrangements with Real Estate Agents prior to arriving in Vicenza. Agencies that have done business with our office in the past have been advised that they must direct new personnel to the Housing Division before showing properties. Incoming personnel need to also be aware of this to preclude obligating themselves in any way.

4. We fully understand that agencies may occasionally be beneficial in supplementing our inventory of properties especially with particular solutions. The intent of this memorandum is not to prohibit their use but to regulate it and ensure personnel is instructed on the potential problems and pitfalls associated.

5. The Housing Division does not recommend use of agencies but advocates utilizing the free and professional services provided by the Housing Division.

6. Agencies are not endorsed by this office but due to requests for information and in the interests of customer service we have provided below a list of several Real Estate Agencies in the Vicenza area that have English speaking personnel and are familiar with the requirements that must be negotiated into leases for U.S. personnel. This does not prohibit personnel from using any other Agency, however prior to signing any contract or paying any fees to Agencies customers must coordinate with the Housing Division for advice.

7. Personnel should also note that all DOD ID Cardholders stationed in Italy are entitled to free legal assistance advice through the Staff Judge Advocate Office, and may want to consult with an attorney prior to signing a rental contract, or any other contract.

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8. **LISTING OF AGENCIES:** The attached listing of Real estate agencies does not imply US Army or DOD endorsement.

9. Point of contact for further information is the undersigned. I can be reached at 646 2766 or email at michael.d.ashwood.civ@army.mil

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