



# HELLO OKAYA

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Summer Issue July 15, 2010

This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Exchange Association, with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insight into aspects of Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback or any questions you may have.

## Typhoon

Typhoon or a tropical cyclone is a low atmospheric pressure originating from the tropical sea. It develops in the northwestern part of the Pacific (west area from 180° east longitude, north of the equator) or South China sea. The maximum wind speed (10 minutes in the average) of the low pressure area is approximately 17 m/s (34 knots, wind force of 8) or higher.

In Japan, it was used to be called "Nowaki," which means "dividing the field grass when it blows," but after the Meiji Period, it became "Taifuu (typhoon)." Most typhoons come to Japan around August and September. The Japan Meteorological Agency names them with a number in the order that they arrive starting with Typhoon No. 1. There is a tendency to think that the center of the storm takes the heaviest toll in all the areas in its path, but rather than the center, it's the right side (southeast side) of the storm (oriented to where it is going to), that receives the most devastation. This is because the direction of the airflow and the path of the storm are aiming at the same spot. When the typhoon comes, the strong winds, high tide, and waves can cause destruction of properties, fallen billboards and trees, damaged buildings (roofs flying off, etc). The heavy rains can also trigger flash floods, destroy roads and bridges and cause landslides and mudslides.

Recently, due to improvements in the weather forecasting technology, dissemination of weather information through the media and disaster prevention agencies, and well-placed disaster prevention and evacuation system, we are experiencing less typhoon calamities than before.

However, in order to prevent further calamities, everyone needs to be prepared and be well aware of disaster-preventive measures. Watch out regularly for typhoon warnings on TV, radio and other sources of information and keep a battery-operated radio and flashlight for unexpected power interruptions. Don't forget to reinforce roofs and walls and stack up on emergency goods. Take also extra precaution against fire hazards. Continuous rains for a long time may cause loose soil and increase the risk of landslides. Evacuating during a storm is extremely dangerous, that's why it is necessary to regularly know such areas at risk, and decide to evacuate to a safer place before the rain and wind become stronger based on weather reports. Even after the rain, areas along the river may be at risk for flooding. You need to be careful about live wires lying around and flood-related hygiene concerns and health risks. The threats posed by typhoon are real but after it passes, the sky clears up, and a refreshing weather sets in. In Japanese this is called, "taifuu ikka," or literally, "after the storm passes."

## ☆Japanese Traditions ~One point Japanese culture~

### The Star Festival

Tanabata is the Weaver Star Festival which occurs on July 7. The Chinese legend, which has it that Altair (the Cowherd Star) and Vega (the Weaver Star) were split apart by two banks of the River of Heaven (the Milky Way) and come together once a year on this night, has aligned with Japanese belief. Originally a festival carried out among the Court nobility, it has since the Edo Period (1603 to 1867) become established among the people at large.

On the night of the 6th, people write their wishes or poems on strips of poetry paper of various colors and hang them on bamboo grass; then, on the night of the 7th, they put them out in the garden. These are attractive enough to be called summer Christmas trees. In Japan, preschools and elementary schools do activities related to this festival during summer.



### Hand-held Fans (Uchiwa and Sensu)



Round Fans (uchiwa) have frameworks of thinly split, spread-out bamboo on which paper is glued. They were brought into Japan from China more than 1,000 years ago. In the hot summer, fanning creates a cool breeze. They are also used for advertising by printing on store names and product names. A person wearing yukata (summer cotton kimono) fanning himself/herself with uchiwa is just a refreshing sight to look at.

Folding Fans (sensu) can be said to be collapsible uchiwa. While uchiwa came from China, sensu originated in Japan. In addition to inducing the cool airflow for cooling oneself, sensu are indispensable props for classical Japanese dance and for comic storytelling. Because the shape of the unfolded fan is "broadening toward the end," symbolizing rising prosperity, it is also used as prop for celebrations or as a memento.



### Morning Glory (Asagao)

An annual climbing plant originally produced in Asia, asagao blooms from midsummer to early fall. It was brought to Japan for medical purposes by an envoy to China sometime in the 900s and began to be cultivated. In keeping with the meaning of its name in Japanese, "morning face," it blooms in the morning and the blossoms close up immediately. Cultivation flourished in the Edo Period (1603 to 1867) and many varieties were developed. In the hot, humid Japanese summer, asagao blooming in the cool morning air soften people's hearts. With the vines removed, the red and purple asagao are usually grown and enjoyed by elementary school children as potted plants during summer.



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# INFORMATION

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## New Residence Control and Foreign Resident Registry System

In 2012, the Alien Registration System (Alien Registration Card or ARC) will be abolished.

The government explains that to further strengthen the residency control, a new Residence Control System and Foreign Resident Registry System will replace the alien registration system. Under the new system, the Japanese Immigration Bureau will assume responsibility for the processing and issuance of Resident Cards, as opposed to municipal government offices, which are currently responsible for the ARC system. In this way, the foreign resident's information will be transferred to the new foreign resident registry system,

freeing the municipal government from responsibility thus enabling the local government to provide better services to its residents. The new foreign resident registry system will register foreign residents on a household

basis akin to the basic resident register for Japanese residents and will be linked to the "Juki Net" registry, a nationwide computer network containing demographic data on residents by municipality. Local governments across Japan will be able to share this information and Japanese spouses will have access to the information of his/her own household.

The municipality office can now access information on so-called "mixed" households, say for example, a Japanese husband living with a non-Japanese wife. Furthermore, the introduction of the new residence management system will ensure further convenience by extending the maximum period of stay from three years to five years and integrate statuses of residence of "College Student" and "Pre-College Student" into a single classification called "College Student." Currently, alien

registration does not concern status of residence, that's why illegal aliens can still register even without permission to stay in Japan. However in the new foreign resident registry system, foreigners with legal permission to stay will be given "Residence Cards" by the Bureau of Immigration. Persons who do not have legal permission to stay will be stricken off and be removed from the new registry system. This means that illegal aliens will no longer be able to avail administrative services from the local municipality. Illegal foreign residents who are registered in the old system will be removed from the new system.

For foreigners who are special permanent residents, the local municipal government shall continue to provide services regarding foreign resident registration certificate and special permanent resident certificate.



### Application for extension of period of stay.



The application for extension of period of stay is submitted by a foreign national staying legally in Japan whose resident status is about to expire to continue his/her activities authorized under his/her status of residence. Non-permanent residents are given a certain length of period of stay. The Bureau of Immigration's official announcement regarding the "Change of status of residence, permission to extend the period of stay guidelines," revised in March 2010, requires the applicant to show his/her insurance card when applying for a visa extension starting April 1, 2010. This is designed to promote enrollment in the Social Insurance scheme. However, this does not mean that failure to show an insurance card would result to a denial of someone's visa extension application.

## Social insurance, National Health Insurance, National Pension Plan

### <Social Insurance>

Qualified foreign nationals employed by companies are eligible for enrollment under the Social Insurance Plan through their employer. Short-term visitors and overstayers are not eligible to enroll in this insurance scheme.

The major social insurances are the employee's health insurance and the employee's pension insurance which are for employees regardless of the type of job they do for their company. Participation in this employee's pension insurance is compulsory for all companies. Except for a few (temporary or daily-hire employees), most of the employees working for a particular company should be covered by this insurance. The insurance premium is determined depending on the income earned by each insured person, and the burden is shared equally by the employer and the insured.

### <National Health Insurance, National Pension>

Registered foreign residents who are permitted to live in Japan for more than one year, and are not enrolled in any health insurance at work should enroll in the National Health Insurance and National Pension plan at the city hall. All overseas students living in Japan for more than a year should be enrolled in the National Health Insurance scheme. Although, this insurance requires a monthly payment of premium, students who do not have work can file for partial exemption (60% of the insurance premium). Overstayers and short-term visitors are not allowed to enroll in this insurance plan. To apply, go to the city hall where you are registered and bring your foreign resident registration card. A foreigner with a "College Student" visa for at least a year can readily enroll in the insurance plan, however someone with a "Pre-college" visa may be requested by the city hall to submit a school certificate. If currently living with the family, the family members are also covered by the insurance. Please verify if you need to write the names of all the family members in your health insurance card. When moving out, go to your new city hall and have your National Health Insurance replaced within 14 days.

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<Lump sum withdrawal>

Foreign nationals who have joined the employee's pension insurance in Japan will be able to claim a partial reimbursement within two years after they have left Japan. The amount to be reimbursed is determined by the period of insurance coverage and the amount of paid insurance premium but should first satisfy the following conditions:

- Does not have Japanese citizenship
- A member of either the National Pension Plan or Employee's Pension Insurance for more than 6 months
- No longer living in Japan
- Has never received pension in Japan (including disability allowance)

To apply:

- (1) Obtain the claim form from the Social Insurance Office or the National Pension Section of the municipal office nearest you.
- (2) Attach the following to your application and send to the Social Insurance Agency after leaving Japan:
  - (1) pension book
  - (2) photocopy of your passport showing your departure date from Japan, name, DOB, nationality, signature
  - (3) a document verifying the name of your bank (in your home country), the name of the branch office, and your bank account number in your name



## Moving in/out

Moving in/out of a place is truly cumbersome with too many work to do and applications to file. To successfully accomplish these things, you need to separate the things that you need to do before you move from the things you need to do after you move. Here's how to effectively do it:

- ① **Notifying the City Hall** This should be done two (2) weeks before moving out.

### ★ Moving in/out

In general, when you have confirmed that you are moving to a new town within Japan, go to the city hall of the town you are leaving from and get a "Certificate of Moving out" (Tenshutshu Shomeisho). Afterwards, bring your license, passport or any other proof of identification to the city hall of the town you are moving to and submit the "Certificate of Moving out" to complete the moving procedure. The "Notification of Moving out" (Tenshutsu Todoke) will be processed within 14 days after moving out of your old address.

[When filing by post]

It is not really necessary to file the "Notification of Moving out" at the City Hall Counter. The City Hall also accepts the notification by post. You only need to provide the following things listed below:

※ There is no specified format. Write the address, name, date of birth, telephone number, expected moving out date, old address, new address, name of the former head of the household, new address, new head of the household, and all the names of the people moving out. of the old address of the person

※ Enclose a self-addressed envelope (write your address and affix postage stamp)

※ Enclose your seal registration certificate (for people who have registered seals)

※ Enclose your National Health Insurance Card (for people enrolled under the National Health Insurance scheme)

※ Copy of your license, passport or any other proof of personal identification

(please consult the City Hall if you do not own any proof of personal identification)

※ Send to the Citizen Affairs Division (Shimin Seikatsu-ka), Okaya City Hall, 8-28 Saiwaicho, Okaya City, Nagano Pref. 394-8510

### ★ National Health Insurance

In the National Health Insurance Scheme, the person residing in a particular town is the one insured by this plan. So it means that when moving to new town (within Japan), one must surrender the insurance card, and apply for a new one at the new town. When applying, you need to have your personal seal (inkan), "Certificate of Moving out," and other documents. Filing may take 14 days at most, after moving to the new place.

### ★ National Pension Plan

There is no need to file anything when moving out. However, bring your pension booklet (or basic pension number notice) to your new city hall, and apply for a change of address for your National Pension Plan. In some city halls, your National Pension Plan's registered address is automatically changed when you change the address of your resident register.

### ★ Cancellation of Seal Registration

When you submit your "Notification of Moving out," your seal registration is automatically cancelled at the city hall where you had it registered. You also need to surrender your seal registration card. Now, if you want to register your seal at your new city hall, bring your seal and any proof of personal identification then proceed with the registration.

### ★ Changing your motorized bicycle registration

When registering or discarding your motorized bicycle, you need to apply at the City Hall. Go to the City Hall of your new address and bring your seal (inkan), license plate, and plate registration certificate to apply. However, processing may differ depending on the town, so it would be best to verify this beforehand.

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② **Electricity/Gas/Water** Apply one week before moving out.

★Electricity

Contact the office written on your receipt or meter reading, directly by telephone or apply online using the internet. Either way, you will need to be ready with your customer billing number. Except for very special cases, you don't need someone to observe during installation/disconnection.

★Gas

Like electricity, you need to place a telephone call directly, or apply online. You may need to have someone present (you or anyone in the family) to observe the person shutting off your gas utility. On the other hand, you are required to have someone witness the gas utility installation since this entails checking and adjusting gas flow.

★Water (Setting up, shutting off or changing account name)

When setting up, shutting off or changing the account name of your water service, you need to apply at the Waterworks Division (Suidou-ka) (4F Okaya City Hall)

When setting up or shutting off your water service, you need to have a person (you or anyone in the house) to observe the installation. (As a general rule, this is done in the afternoon) Fee is 1,300 yen.

When discontinuing your water service, you need to provide your new address and contact information during application. Fee is 1,300 yen.

When changing the registered account name, provide the address and the contact information of the new as well as the old account name. This is free of charge.

Call the Waterworks Division (Suidou-ka), or send the application by fax, 2 to 3 days before your desired installation date. Please be advised that failing to submit the application may cause trouble and inconvenience. Discontinuance/Installation services are closed during Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, year-end and new year. Tel. 0266-23-4811 Local 1416 to 1418 Fax 0266-24-0294



③ **Contacting NTT (for your home telephone) and your internet service provider**

When transferring your telephone/NTT line to your new address, you can call 116 or file the application online. Transferring lines may entail construction work so it is recommended that you make the call or file the application as soon as possible. Within 7 days, you can use both the telephone at your old and new address. There is also a service that gives out your new telephone number to someone who calls your old number (for about 3 months after transferring phone lines).

Call your internet service provider as soon you finish applying for your telephone line transfer. If you want to use your internet on the day you move to your new address, try applying for a transfer one month in advance. The days it will take for your internet connection to be transferred, the fees, and procedures vary according to company, so it is important to contact your internet service provider beforehand. Same as when you are transferring your telephone line, be ready to provide your new address, your expected day of transfer/construction of new line and your current service status.

④ **Notifying your bank** You can also begin the application after moving out.

There are a number of ways on how you can change your address registered at the bank or post office. This can be done online, by phone or by post. You can also use the automated TV application window (videophone) at nighttime or during weekends. Service may differ depending on the bank, so it would be best to find out the most convenient method for you. Changing your registered address is basically done after moving out.

Changing your credit card's registered understand can be done online, by phone, by post or through the service desk of the credit card company. When applying by post, it is recommended that you call your credit company before moving out to ensure that they can send the forms to your new address. Like changing your credit card's registered address, you also need to file a similar application for your insurance company.

⑤ **Changing your car and motorcycle registration**

You need to change the registration of your car or motorcycle (255 cc and above) within 15 days after moving out. The procedure for changing your car registration is listed below:

- Secure a parking space/garage for your car
- Apply for a certificate verifying ownership of a parking space (at the police station having jurisdiction over your district)
- Get the certificate of parking ownership from that police station
- Apply for a change of car registration at the transportation branch office or automobile inspection and registration office. Please bring the required documents (i.e. Application form, statement of payment of handling charge, copy of citizen card, personal seal (inkan), certificate of parking space ownership)

Similar to automobile registration, registering your new address for your motorcycle (251 cc and above) or motorbikes is done after you move out at your Land Transportation Office, but the required documents for submission may slightly differ. The window accepting applications at the Automobile Inspection Office may also differ for light vehicles.

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