

DRIVING ON OKINAWA



Welcome to Kadena Air Base Japan
18th Wing Safety

DRIVING ON OKINAWA

This section covers US and Japanese Traffic Laws as they apply to Status of Forces Personnel driving a vehicle on Okinawa. It is not intended to be a complete summary of all traffic regulations. This pamphlet is your training syllabus to prepare you for taking the USFJ Form 4EJ driving test.

1. **Requirements:** Persons who desire to operate a privately owned vehicle must possess a US Forces Japan (USFJ) Operator's Permit for Civilian Vehicle, (USFJ Form 4EJ).
2. **Who may be licensed?** SOFA status personnel assigned to Kadena Air Base on orders either PCS or TDY.
3. **Licensing Procedures:** 18 SFS is the issuing agency for the USFJ 4EJ license and personnel must pass a written test administered by the safety office with a passing score of 70. The test consists of Japanese and base traffic rules/laws from this pamphlet and international signs. Testing will be conducted every Monday during base newcomer's orientation at the Schilling Community Activities Center. A local conditions safety video will be viewed by all personnel requesting a license prior to taking the test. You must have a valid driver's license, to obtain the USFJ Form 4EJ. The USFJ Form 4EJ is the only driver's license valid for use in Okinawa by US Forces personnel operating privately owned or Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) Registered vehicles. Once licensed, you must always carry this form with you while driving. *Call Security Forces Pass & ID section at 634-4172 for licensing information (Bldg 721-B).*
4. **Professional Driver:** As a licensed driver in Japan you are immediately considered a "professional driver" and are subject to all Japanese laws on and off base.
5. **Documentation Required:** Vehicle owners must ensure the following valid documents are in their vehicle at all times:
 - DOD identification card.
 - Base Registration, DD Form 430, Military Registration and Certificate of Title of Motor Vehicle.
 - Current Year GOJ Road Tax receipt and a Japanese Title reflecting a current Japanese Inspection Date.
 - Proof of Property Damage Insurance (PDI). This is liability insurance commonly referred to as "American" insurance.
 - Proof of Japanese Compulsory Insurance. This is insurance required by the GOJ commonly referred to as "JCI". (Consult Camp Foster Vehicle Registration or local insurance agency for current minimum coverage).
 - Operator's permit (4EJ) as identified in AFI 31-204 18 WG Sup 1. Para 2.1.1.
6. **Vehicle Maintenance:** Under the provisions of the Japanese Road Law, police officers have the authority to avert traffic danger by pulling a vehicle to the side when it is not mechanically fit to be on the road. The officer may give the driver an itemized list of what is needed to make the vehicle safe. If the officer deems it necessary, they may affix a sticker to the front of the unsafe vehicle, clearly visible to all, denoting that the vehicle is in need of maintenance. No person may destroy or mutilate the sticker. It may be removed only after the owner or user receives confirmation from the administrative agency exercising authority over the vehicle's maintenance.
7. **Safety Inspections:** Owners of civilian vehicles will be required to present their vehicles every two years for a safety inspection by qualified mechanics. Inspection of privately owned motor vehicles, known as GOJ or Government of Japan inspection will be required for registration renewal at the Joint Services Vehicle Registration Office at Camp Foster (645-7481/3963).
8. **Vehicle Malfunctions:** If a motor vehicle malfunctions or breaks down in traffic, the driver must clearly display an emergency warning device. Vehicles traveling on national expressways must be equipped with a triangular emergency warning device. Warning devices are available at the Exchange service stations and car care centers.
9. **Vehicle Modifications:** Any modifications to vehicles are illegal. Some examples are: loud horns, additional mirrors, or changes to raise or lower manufactured suspension systems. Check before making any modifications.
10. **Speed Limits:** Speed limits on Okinawa are posted as kilometers per hour instead of miles per hour. Speedometers on Japanese made vehicles register in kilometers per hour. If you aren't currently a good and cautious driver, change now or you will find yourself walking both on and off-base. **If you speed** 20 km or more over the posted speed limit in a military family housing area and

school zones your privileges will be suspended for 7 days – 1st offense, 30 days – 2nd offense, 90 days – 3rd offense, and permanently for subsequent offenses. **If you speed** 20 km or more over the posted speed limit when outside a military family housing areas and school zones, privileges will be suspended for 3 days – 1st offense, 7 days – 2nd offense, 30 days – 3rd and 1 year for subsequent offenses.

10.1. Speed limits:

- 10 KPH parking lots, while backing a motor vehicle, and when operating within 10 feet of a building
- 40 KPH unless otherwise posted
- 40 KPH residential areas
- 25 KPH school zones during posted hours or when caution lights are flashing.
- 15 KPH recreational areas and construction zones
- The maximum speed limit on base is 60 KPH.
- The maximum speed limit on the Okinawa Expressway is 80 KPH.
- Most off base residential or business areas are restricted to 40 - 50 KPH.

11. Converting to the Left Side of the Road:

11.1. The primary traffic rule is vehicles will always keep to the left side of the road.. Passing a vehicle is done in the right hand lane or to the right of the vehicle being passed on a two-lane street. A solid or broken white line in the center of the road marks the centerline and vehicles may pass other vehicles to the right when conditions allow for passing.

11.2. One of the most common violations is driving in the bus lane. The very left lane on designated roads is reserved for buses, working taxis, motorcycles/mopeds, and permitted vehicles. Other cars must use other lanes except when a driver has to turn left. Bus lanes are enforced weekdays from 7 A.M. – 9:30 A.M. and from 5:30 P.M. -7:30 P.M. on the designated roads. There are no bus lanes on weekends or Japanese holidays.

12. Seat Belts: Japanese traffic laws require that the front seat occupants of private motor vehicles wear seat belts at all times. DOD instructions require all personnel in a moving motor vehicle on DOD installations must ensure operability and use of available installed occupant protective devices (restraints, air bags, child safety seats, etc.) required by the Code of Federal regulation, Part 571, Federal motor Vehicle Safety Standards. However, DOD instructions also require all military personnel, all DOD civilians in duty status, and all persons in a DOD-owned motor vehicle to wear seat belts on and off the installation. Failure to wear a seat belt while operating a motor vehicle will automatically result in the loss of on-base driving privileges and license will be suspended for 1 week – 1st offense, 1 month – 2nd offenses within a 12-month period, and 1 year – 3rd offenses within an 18-month period.

12.2. Children 4 years of age or under or not exceeding 50 pounds in weight must be secured in a US Department of Transportation (DOT) infant/child restraint device, properly affixed to the seat where it is located. Children not in the above category must be secured in standard safety belt.

13. Drinking and Driving: Drinking and driving is not tolerated on Okinawa or Kadena AB. You may be arrested with as little as one beer in your system due to the Driving While Drinking Indicated (DWDI) law. Roadblocks are a common occurrence and are used to detect drivers that have been consuming alcoholic beverages. The local police use an alcohol "Sensing Wand" to detect vapors in your car during these roadblocks. If caught Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or DWDI, you will face heavy fines and possible detention time. Fines are heavy and your driving privileges could be revoked for 2 years if caught drinking and driving. Alcohol not only slows your reaction time, it also affects your judgment. Drunk drivers tend to become reckless. Use a designated driver if you're going to drink, call a taxi or call 634-2233 (AADD, Airman Against Drunk Driving).

14. Emergency Vehicles: When you hear a siren indicating that an emergency vehicle is approaching you, pull over to the left as far as possible and come to a stop until the vehicle has passed. On a one way street it is permissible to stop on the right so emergency vehicles can proceed on the left.

15. Yield versus Proceed Slowly: On Okinawa, "yield" signs are known as "proceed slowly" signs. They are triangular shaped like the stop signs; however, they have a red border and white interior. When you approach a yield sign proceed slowly and reduce your speed and prepare to stop if necessary.

16. Right-of-Way at an Uncontrolled Intersection:

16.1. Any vehicle traveling on a priority road (larger or wider road) has the right-of-way.

16.2. Any vehicle traveling on a wider road has the right-of-way.

16.3. Any vehicle approaching the intersection on the left has the right-of-way over the one on the right.

16.4. Any vehicle entering or traveling in the intersection is required to pay attention to other vehicles as well as pedestrians in and around or crossing the road; and must proceed at the safest possible speed in accordance with conditions of the intersection.

17. **Left Turns on Red:** Left turn on a red light is against the Japanese Traffic Laws, except when permitted by a traffic control device (a blue signal arrow or white sign with a blue arrow). Note: Left turns on a red light after completely stopping is allowed on Kadena AB only.

18. **Power Outages:** On Kadena AB, intersections with traffic lights will become a 4-way-stop whenever a power outage or light malfunction occurs. The vehicle to the left has the right of way.

19. **Three Car Rule:** The "Three Car Rule" should be remembered while driving on Okinawa. Although not actually a rule, do not enter an intersection until you are sure that all cross traffic has halted. It is a common occurrence for at least three vehicles to continue through the intersection even after the light has turned red. Be sure the "coast is clear."

20. **Motorcycle Training:** Applicants must have a valid operator's permit and successfully completed a course approved by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) to qualify for a motorcycle endorsement. This training is currently provided by Base Safety Motorcycle Training School, or the training can be completed at another MSF accredited facility. If the completion certificate is more than three years old refresher training will be provided. Personnel will not borrow or loan motorcycles to or from personnel who are not properly trained and licensed. For further details, call 634-2450.

20.1. Motorcycle operators with less than one year of riding experience are permitted to operate motorcycles with less than 600 CC (4-stroke) and less than 200 CC (2-stroke). This motorcycle size limitation will be annotated on the driver's license, the USFJ Form 4EJ, of the operator. In addition, operators must have a minimum of one-year of motorcycle experience prior to having their permit designated as authorized to carry passengers.

21. **Motorcycle Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Operator and any passenger must wear impact resistant goggles or a full-face shield on their helmet. **EXCEPTION:** Goggles or a full-face shield are not required for the operator if the motorcycle is equipped with a windshield that is equal in height to or above the top of the helmet of the properly upright-seated operator.

21.2. International Orange or lime-green reflective vest. Outer upper garment will be clearly visible and not covered.

21.3. Long sleeved shirts or jackets, full-fingered motorcycle gloves or mittens, and long trousers.

21.4. Sturdy footwear. Leather boots or over-the ankle shoes are strongly encouraged.

21.5. Failure to wear the proper equipment while operating a motorcycle will automatically result in the loss of on-base driving privileges and license will be suspended for 1 week – 1st offense, 1 month – 2nd offenses within a 12-month period, and 1 year – 3rd offenses within an 18-month period.

22. **Motorcycles:** Motorcycles are restricted to the far left-hand lane, in either direction on Highway 58 from Naha port to Kadena Circle, Highway 329 from Ishikawa to Naha and Highway 330 from Okinawa City to Naha, except within 30 meters (100 feet) of a right hand turn.

22.1. Operating a motorcycle in between rows of vehicles or parked cars is illegal.

23. **Bicycles:** Bicycle riders on the roadway are subject to the same traffic laws as drivers of motorized vehicles. Bicycles operated after hours of darkness will have a headlight that projects a white light visible for 500 feet in front of the bicycle. Headlights will be turned on between sunset and sunrise or when visibility is poor. A rear reflector, visible from 200 feet, will be affixed to each bicycle. Bicycles operated on the roadway will be operated in a single file, with the flow of traffic, as far to the left as safely possible. Any person operating a bicycle on Kadena AB is required to wear an approved helmet.

24. **Non Motorized Vehicles:** All personnel (including dependents, and retirees) who roller-skate, in-line skate, skateboard, or use foot-propelled scooters on PACAF installations must wear an approved Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), American National Standard Institute(ANSI), Snell Memorial Foundation, or host-nation certified helmet.

25. **Mishaps:** Despite traffic laws and precautions taken by drivers, mishaps will still occur. By simply assessing the risk involved with day to day driving on Okinawa and applying some basic control measures you will greatly reduce your chance of being involved in an accident. Always plan ahead and allow yourself a cushion between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead of you. A common contributor for vehicle mishaps on Okinawa is "driving too fast for conditions." Other contributors are: congested roadways, slick roadway surfaces, pedestrians, roadway construction, and narrow roads. You should know what to do if you become involved in an accident, whether it is your fault or not. If you are involved in an accident, first of all, assist the injured, remain at the scene, exchange personal data and notify the local prefectural police and the Security Police or Military Police. Do not move your vehicle until told to do so by the police. Moving your vehicle will hamper the investigation and you could be automatically found at fault. In traffic accidents involving more than minor property damage, the driver, unless incapacitated, will attend to the injured and not move the accident vehicles or leave the scene of the accident until military or civil law enforcement personnel authorize his or her departure. You are required to report all accidents (both major and minor) to the Provost Marshal (Military Police) of the area in which the accident occurred.

26. **Crosswalks:** Whenever a pedestrian is using or waiting to use a marked crosswalk, a vehicle must make a temporary stop at the white "stop line" and not interfere with the pedestrian's movement. A pedestrian using a crosswalk has the right-of-way over vehicles at all times. Pedestrians should use extreme caution when crossing in marked crosswalks. You should ensure that all traffic has stopped before stepping onto the crosswalk.

27. **Knowing the Rules of the Road:**

27.1. Driving on Kadena AB and Okinawa is not as difficult as you may have been told or think. It certainly is different than driving stateside; therefore, extra care must be used in order to drive safely here. This pamphlet is not all-inclusive but it will provide you a good start at understanding the driving conditions here. It is your responsibility to learn the local traffic laws here and abide by them. We also recommend that you become familiar with AFI 31-204, 18 WG Sup 1, and AFI 91-207.

27.2. We recommend that once you obtain your license and purchase your car that you spend some time driving on base before you venture off base. The streets are wider on base and are not as congested as off base. Remember, if you find yourself traveling on the wrong side of the street, (and it happens), just stop and get your bearings, and then correct the situation. One of the places to find when you drive off base is Camp Lester Naval Hospital. You don't want an emergency to occur in the middle of the night and not know how to get to the hospital.

27.3. Backing mishaps occur almost daily on Kadena AB. We believe that most backing mishaps occur because many folks are forgetting the basic principals of safe backing. Look behind you before backing and ensure that vehicles, buildings, and other obstructions are not interfering.

27.4 Exercising: "Fit to Fight" is now as common of saying as "Look both ways before you cross a street." Speaking of streets, many of you will be using the base streets during your workouts. Most likely is the area around the Risner Fitness Center and Jennings Housing area. Below are a few reminders on how to use the base streets safely during your workout.

27.5. Joggers and runners exercising on the roadway will wear reflective material on their upper body from official sunset to sunrise or during conditions of reduced visibility. The reflective material may be a reflective belt, reflective vest, or highly reflective clothing.

27.6. Joggers and runners will run on the outermost edge of the roadway and not interfere with the flow of traffic. When a sidewalk is present, joggers will use sidewalk, but not interfere with pedestrian traffic.

27.7 Joggers/runners will not wear "walk-man" type headsets while running on roadways to include traversing intersections. If you feel you must wear them, workout on the track located at Risner Fitness Center or Kadena High School.

28. **Headphones/Walk-man:** will not be worn when exposed to traffic, i.e., riding a bicycle, skating, skateboarding, walking/jogging on the road, or operating any motorized vehicle etc.

29. One final note: By firmly applying risk management into all aspect of your daily life – at home, on the beach or on the road- we can prevent many injuries and accidents. Preventing mishaps is an attainable goal, and with your help we can do it. All you have to do is have a plan in place that analyzes the risk involved with your day – to day activities and implement measures to reduce that risk down to an acceptable level.

30. **Further Assistance:** If questions arise, be sure to ask someone before starting out. Your sponsor should be able to assist you, but if they can't, feel free to call the 18th Wing Ground Safety office at 634-SAFE. Once again welcome to Okinawa.

INTERNATIONAL ROAD SIGNS USED IN JAPAN

CONTROL/RESTRICTION SIGNS						
Proceed slowly	Reserved lane for buses	Motor vehicles only	60 minutes parking	Right or left turn only	Road closed for light vehicles except bicycles	Road closed
Stop	Priority lane for route buses, etc	Bicycles only	Road closed for vehicles carrying explosives	Proceed on the left	Road closed for bicycles	Road closed for vehicles
Road closed for pedestrians	Designating lanes usage for veh intending to travel in certain directions	Pedestrians and bicycles only	Weight limit (5.5 tons)	No right turn and no crossing of road	Road closed for all motor vehicles	Motor vehicles prohibited to enter
No pedestrian crossing	Designating lanes usage for veh intending to travel in certain directions	Pedestrians only	Height limit (3.3 meters)	No U turns	No double riding on two wheeled motor vehicles	Road closed for motor vehicles except motorcycles
End of speed limit	Designating lanes usage for veh intending to travel in certain directions	One way	Width limit (2.2 meters)	No passing	Left or through traffic only	Road closed for large truck and special duty veh
Road closed for all vehicles except emergency vehicles	Designating lanes usage for veh intending to travel in certain directions	One way	Maximum speed limit (50 KPH-31 MPH)	No parking or stopping	Left turn only	Road closed for large passenger vehicles
Sound horn	Type of vehicles designated to travel in specific lane	Minimum speed limit (30 KPH-18 MPH)	No parking	Through traffic only	Road closed for motorcycles and motorbikes	

INTERNATIONAL ROAD SIGNS USED IN JAPAN

WARNING SIGNS			GUIDE SIGNS						
Width of road reduced	Zig zaging curves	Cross intersection	Route No.	Toll gate	Area and exit	Area direction and routes	Pre-notice of area and direction	Area, direction and distance	City, town, village
Two-way traffic	Railroad crossing	Side road ahead	Prefectural road number	Servicing area	Area and exit	Pre-notice of next exit	Pre-notice of area and direction	Area, direction and distance	Prefecture
Upgrade	School zone	"T" intersection	Name of street	Servicing area	Exit	Area and pre-notice of exit	Area and direction	Area and distance	Prefecture
Downgrade	Traffic signal ahead	Forked road	Name of street	Emergency phone	Exit	Area and pre-notice of exit	Area and direction	Area and distance	Direction of entrance
Road under construction	Slippery	Traffic circle	Detour	Pull over area	Famous place	Area, lane number, pre-notice of exit	Area and direction	Area and distance	Direction of entrance
Caution cross wind	Rocks may fall	Sharp right curve	Detour	Pull over area	Famous place	Area, lane number, pre-notice of exit	Area and direction	Area and distance	Direction of entrance
Other hazardous condition	Rough road surface	Right turn	Detour	Parking area	Famous place	Area, lane number, pre-notice of exit	Area and direction	Area and lane	Pre-notice of entrance
Railroad crossing	Merging traffic	Right and left curve	Emergency parking	Main place	Area and exit	Area and direction	Area and lane	Area, direction, distance	
Water for fire prevention	Number of lanes reduced	Right turn followed by left turn							