



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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People's Republic of China – Updates on Z-Visas and Travelers' Biometric Data

A new Order recently issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in the People's Republic of China streamlines the requirements for Chinese employers to obtain work visas (Z-visas) for foreign employees. In addition, efforts have been stepped up – including the use of biometric information – to strengthen the supervision and administration of exit/entry of foreigners from/to the country.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Order 32 is expected to result in a smoother, less time-consuming application process – meaning foreign workers could obtain visas more quickly than in the past.

The change introduced by Order 32, along with a series of other recent administrative policies governing foreigners working in China, should reduce lead time for Z visa applications.

Order 32 Background

On March 13, 2017, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security promulgated Order No.32¹ to revise the Administrative Provisions on the Employment of Foreigners in China ("Circular 29")².

The new rules, which aim to simplify the employment of foreigners in China, became effective on the date of issuance.

Visa Process Simplification

Order No. 32 streamlines the requirements for Chinese employers to obtain work visas (Z-visas) for foreign employees. Effective March 13, 2017, foreigners who wish to apply for a work visa (Z-visa) are no longer required to submit an

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“Invitation Letter of Duly Authorized Unit” or “Confirmation Letter of Invitation” as part of the visa application supporting documents.

Foreign applicants can apply for a Z visa with an overseas Chinese embassy, consulate, or (air)port visa office by submitting their passport or equivalent ID, and a work permit notification letter issued by the respective labor bureau in China. This change should reduce lead time for Z visa applications from approximately six weeks to four weeks.

KPMG NOTE

As Order No. 32 has been in force since mid-March, implementation of the new rules has been observed to vary across the country. In order to avoid unnecessary delays, applicants are advised to liaise with the relevant commerce commission, foreign affairs office, or Chinese embassy on the local practice in the district in which they plan to work, and which will issue the Z visa.

Supervision and Administration of Exit and Entry of Foreigners

While it is the intent of the authorities to simplify the visa application procedures for highly-skilled foreign workers, the authorities have also stepped up their efforts to strengthen the supervision and administration of exit/entry of foreigners from/to China. From January 29, 2017, the Ministry of Public Security began to deploy a biometric identification system at airport passport check-points, and launched a pilot project at Shenzhen airport and other airports on February 10, 2017, to collect biometric identifications, such as fingerprints from incoming foreign nationals aged between 14 and 70. This system will be rolled out to other airports in due course.

KPMG NOTE

Deployment of biometric border security systems will help to track and manage the flow of people across borders, and also detect and prevent the use of false identities.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Order No.32 of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.
- 2 Administrative Provisions on the Employment of Foreigners in China, Laobufa [1996] No. 29 (“Circular 29”).

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RELATED ARTICLE

This article is excerpted, with permission, from “Foreign Worker China Visa Application Process Simplified,” in *China Tax Alert* (Issue 12, May 2017), a publication of the KPMG International member firm in the People’s Republic of China.

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