

TEMPORARY TRAVEL FLEXIBILITY FOR UNITED STATES CITIZENS AIR ENVIRONMENT

Since January 23, 2007, all citizens of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Bermuda or the Caribbean have been required to present a valid passport when entering the United States at any airport. This includes:

- Children of any age, including children of Legal Permanent Residents who are United States citizens.
- Mexican citizens who have a Border Crossing Card (BCC) when entering the United States by air. (The BCC is still valid in lieu of a passport and visa for land border crossings within the border region.) The BCC may be used as a visa.

Due to longer than expected processing times for passport applications in the face of record-breaking demand, the federal government is making an accommodation for air travel. U.S. citizens traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda who have applied for but not yet received passports can temporarily enter and depart from the United States by air with a government issued photo identification and Department of State official proof of application for a passport through Sept. 30, 2007.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Who is affected?

This accommodation is available to Americans traveling by air and returning from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda.

U.S. citizens who take advantage of this accommodation will need to present the official proof of passport application to air carriers and to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at air ports of entry. Such individuals may be subject to secondary inspection.

What will be acceptable proof of application for a passport?

A print-out of the online status check accessed at <http://travel.state.gov/passport>, showing an application has been received by the Department of State.

When does this accommodation go into effect? How long will it last?

Since January 23, 2007, all citizens of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Bermuda have been required to present a valid passport when entering the United States at any air port of entry.

Due to longer than expected processing times for passport applications in the face of record-breaking demand, the federal government is making an accommodation for air travel. U.S. citizens traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda who have applied for but not yet received passports can temporarily enter and depart from the United States by air with a government issued photo identification and Department of State official proof of application for a passport through September 30, 2007.

Do I need a passport to go on a cruise or to travel by vehicle across the land border to Canada or Mexico?

No, but it is recommended that U.S. citizens carry and present government-issued identification when requested. Although not currently required to present a document, U.S. citizens arriving by land and sea must still establish to the satisfaction of the inspecting officer that they are U.S. citizens.

As early as January 2008, the Departments of Homeland Security and State will begin to implement WHTI at land and sea ports of entry. A Notice of Proposed Rule Making outlining a phased implementation is expected to be published in the *Federal Register* within the next two weeks.

Do I need a passport if I'm flying within the United States, for example from Puerto Rico to New York?

- Domestic travel within the United States does not require the presentation of a passport.

The passport requirement does NOT apply to U.S. citizens traveling to or returning directly from a U.S. territory. U.S. citizens returning directly from a U.S. territory are not considered to have left the United States and do not need to present a passport. U.S. territories include the following: Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S.

Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Swains Island, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

What is your advice to travelers?

- Travelers who have applied for passports should monitor the status of the application online at <http://travel.state.gov/passport>. Customers may track the progress of their applications within one week of applying. The online status check will verify that the application is in process, and will update to confirm that the completed passport has been mailed.
- If a customer is within two weeks of travel and the website does not show that the passport is completed, travelers should call the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at 1-877-487-2778 for information and assistance in arranging to have their passports ready for their trips.
- We ask that other travelers leave these phone lines open for those with immediate travel needs. Our goal is for all travelers to get their passports in time for their trips.
- If you benefit from the flexibility permitted for travel to Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean, and Bermuda, you do not need to contact the NPIC about your application. We will continue to process your application and mail your passports.

What advice do you have for travelers who have not yet applied for passports?

- Travelers who have not applied for passports should plan 10 to 12 weeks for standard passport processing and two to three weeks for expedited processing.
- (IF ASKED) This is an increase over our earlier ten-week turnaround time.
- Applying as far in advance as possible is always the best advice, and not needing to expedite saves money.
- Complete information on how to apply for a passport is available at the Consular Affairs website, <http://travel.state.gov>.

I haven't applied yet and I need my passport soon. How do I get expedited service for my passport application?

- Applicants traveling in two to three weeks may apply using expedited service at their nearest passport acceptance facility. Your nearest passport acceptance facility may be found at <http://iafdb.travel.state.gov/>.
- Those traveling in less than two weeks who have not yet applied for a passport should contact us by email using the form at http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/npic/npic_896.html or by calling 1-877-487-2778 for information and to schedule an appointment.
- Applicants should be sure to indicate on their application their travel plans and intended departure date.
- A tip: applicants requesting and paying for expedited service must write "EXPEDITE" on the outside of the envelope containing their application.

Should people go to a Passport Agency if they can't get an appointment?

- Passport agencies are striving to assist customers with urgent travel needs. Agencies are open by appointment only, and require applicants to demonstrate that they are traveling or need to apply for a foreign visa within two weeks.

Why do the Passport Offices and the Post Office provide conflicting information, e.g., you say it will take 10-12 weeks, but the post office says it will take 14 weeks or longer?

- The most reliable source of information on applying for a passport is our internet site, <http://travel.state.gov>. We encourage all travelers to check this site for information, not just on getting a passport but also for tips on safe travel and other useful information.

Why should people have to pay the expedited fee when they sent their passport applications in within the suggested time period but now are faced with missing their flights?

- Our specialists will review your file and determine the best way to get your passport to you. Depending on the situation, we may arrange to deliver your passport by mail or overnight courier, or schedule an appointment for you at a regional passport office.

How will U.S. lawful permanent residents (LPRs) be affected by this travel flexibility?

LPRs will continue to be able to use their Alien Registration Card (Form I-551), issued by DHS, or other valid evidence of permanent residence status to apply for entry to the United States.

Why these changes?

We are aware that some travelers have not been able to obtain passports because of longer processing times caused by record-setting demand. Accordingly, we're allowing flexibility because we are hearing about more cases of Americans missing flights. As a service organization dedicated to helping Americans, we cannot let this happen.

Some of the advantages of this accommodation are that current travelers will be relieved and this will allow us to better prioritize our work so that no American traveler will miss a trip.

How long will Americans have to wait to get a passport regularly processed while the rules are relaxed?

Regular processing takes between 10 to 12 weeks. Expedited passport processing takes between two and three weeks.

What has the Department of State been doing to improve the processing of applications?

The Department is working hard to meet the challenge of this increased demand – our goal is that Americans have the documents they need for their travels abroad. We expanded the hours of operation at all of our passport agencies, including

evenings and weekends, to maximize the use of production equipment; counters are open on Saturdays for emergency appointments, which we are scheduling through our call center.

- The National Passport Center (NPC) in Portsmouth, NH and the Charleston Passport Center (CPC), which together issue over 50 percent of all passports nationwide, are operating 24 hours in three shifts per day. Several agencies now operate two shifts.
- We recently opened the Arkansas Passport Center (APC) in Hot Springs, a mega-processing center that will be our largest passport production center.
- The Department assembled “surge” teams of passport specialists, who deploy to exceptionally high volume passport agencies to assist with walk-in applicants and to process applications. These teams also provide customer support, including locating and expediting applications of customers with urgent travel needs in order to avoid future instances of customers not making their scheduled trips.
- Our aggressive recruiting efforts brought 259 new full-time and contract employees on board in the last three months, and scores more have received offers of employment. Recruitment continues across the country.
- The National Passport Information Center (1-877-487-2778) is open on weekdays, from 6 a.m. to midnight Monday through Friday, Eastern Time, and on weekends, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to provide customers with information and assistance.
- The Department has installed high-capacity telephone lines.
- Additionally, on top of their regular duties, State Department employees are volunteering on task forces, answering questions, and helping Americans get their passports.
- Qualified State Department employees are also volunteering to help process passport applications.
- These volunteers supplement the Department’s corps of passport specialists, which has increased by approximately 280 new hires since 2005.

Why is the demand so high?

- On January 23, 2007, new passport regulations mandated by the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative took effect, requiring Americans to have passports when they travel to and from the United States by air.
- Some citizens are also applying in anticipation of the implementation of WHTI to land and sea travel.
- Americans continue to travel abroad for tourism, business, and other purposes.
- The U.S. passport is still the best proof of citizenship and identity, and many Americans want this document for non-travel purposes.

How many passports is the State Department issuing?

Passport demand is now at an all-time high.

- In Fiscal Year 2006, we issued 12.1 million passports; we're on pace to issue 17.5 million passports this year.
- For the first eight months of Fiscal Year 2007, October 2006 to May 2007, the Department issued 10.3 million passports, a 37 percent increase over the same period last year.
- Today, approximately 78 million Americans – a little over one-quarter of the population – have valid passports.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

What is the requirement for children under 16 who are United States citizens?

Children traveling with a parent or legal guardian will be required to present the receipt from the Department of State (DOS) Passport Services indicating confirmation of an application upon arrival to and departure from the United States. Acceptable confirmation for a passport application can be found at the Department of State's website at www.travel.state.gov.

Children traveling alone should carry a copy of their birth certificate, baptismal record or a hospital record of birth in the United States.

What is the requirement for United States citizens over the age of 16?

Adults who have applied for but not yet received a passport should present government-issued photo identification and an official proof of application from the U.S. Department of State. Travelers who have not applied for a passport should not expect to be accommodated. U.S. Citizens with pending passport applications can obtain proof of application at: <http://travel.state.gov/passport>.

Will a citizen of Canada be permitted to travel within the Western Hemisphere with only a government-issued photo identification and a passport application receipt?

Since implementation, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has and will continue to exercise its current authorities in unique circumstances to allow individuals subject to the WHTI requirements into the U.S. based on other evidence of identity and citizenship.

I am traveling to Europe and I have not yet received my passport. May I travel on government issued photo identification and a receipt for confirmation for a passport application?

No, this accommodation does not affect entry requirements to other countries. U.S. Citizens traveling to a country that requires passports must still present those documents.

When will U.S. Citizens be required to carry a passport or other acceptable document for WHTI?

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Will the air carriers be advised of this flexibility and allow me to board the aircraft?

The carriers have been notified of this temporary travel flexibility for U.S. Citizens.

I will be traveling via private aircraft, what documents do I need to present?

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When traveling via private aircraft, U.S. Citizens will be required to present government-issued photo identification, such as a driver's license, and Department of State official proof of application for a passport upon arrival to and departure from the United States.

Why is DHS only accepting on-line receipts and not manual receipts from the post office or other designated passport issuance agencies?

The on-line application and confirmation can be verified by CBP upon entry. There is no capability to verify confirmation with manual receipts.