

Travel Document Requirements for Entry into the United States by Land or Sea

<p>▶ <b>What is the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative?</b></p> <p>The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) is the plan to implement a key 9/11 Commission recommendation and a requirement of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. WHTI establishes document requirements for travel by land or sea into the United States from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. Travel between the U.S. mainland and U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands is not affected.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What requirements changed on June 1, 2009?</b></p> <p>U.S., Canadian, and Bermudian citizens must now present approved travel documents when entering the United States at land or sea ports of entry.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Why is WHTI being implemented for land and sea travel?</b></p> <p>The goal of secure, standardized travel documents is to strengthen border security while facilitating entry into the United States for U.S. citizens and legitimate international travelers, making the process more secure, more efficient and more convenient.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What types of documents are accepted as of June 1, 2009 for entry into the United States via land or sea by U.S. and Canadian citizens?</b></p> <p>U.S. citizen adult travelers can present a valid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Passport;</li> <li>• Passport Card;</li> <li>• Enhanced Driver's License;</li> <li>• Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST);</li> <li>• U.S. Military identification card when traveling on official orders;</li> <li>• U.S. Merchant Mariner document when traveling on official business; or</li> <li>• Form I-872 American Indian Card; or</li> <li>• Enhanced Tribal Card (when available).</li> </ul> <p>Canadian citizen adult travelers can present a valid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canadian passport;</li> <li>• Enhanced Driver's License; or</li> <li>• Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST).</li> </ul>
<p>▶ <b>What is required for U.S. and Canadian children?</b></p> <p>U.S. and Canadian citizen children under age 16 arriving by land or sea from a contiguous territory (Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean) may present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card.</p> <p>For groups of children, U.S. and Canadian citizen children under age 19 arriving by land or sea from a contiguous territory and traveling with a school group, religious group, social or cultural organization, or sports team, may also present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card.</p> <p>The group should provide, on an organizational letterhead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The name of the group and of supervising adult.</li> <li>• A list of the children on the trip, the primary home address, phone number, date of birth, and place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child.</li> <li>• A written and signed statement of the supervising adult certifying that he or she has obtained parental or legal guardian consent for each participating child.</li> </ul>
<p>▶ <b>How do WHTI document requirements affect Native Americans?</b></p> <p>The American Indian Card (Form I-872) is currently a WHTI-compliant document for entry by land or sea.</p> <p>CBP is currently working with several Native American tribes toward the development of Enhanced Tribal Cards (ETCs), which upon designation by CBP, will be WHTI-compliant documents.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What about military personnel?</b></p> <p>U.S. citizens members of the U.S. Armed Forces (Active Duty or Reserves) who are coming to or departing from the United States under official orders (to include leave orders) may present a military identification card and the official orders when entering the United States. Those not under official travel or leave orders and presenting a military ID will not be considered WHTI-compliant.</p> <p>Alien members of the United States Armed Forces, and alien members of the force of a NATO country, who are coming to or departing from the United States under official orders should present their military identification and official orders.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What is required for Bermudian citizens?</b></p> <p>All Bermudian citizens are required to present a valid passport issued by Bermuda or the United Kingdom.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Whose document requirements are not affected by this change?</b></p> <p>WHTI does not affect document requirements for Mexican citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What are the document requirements for U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents?</b></p> <p>U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents are required to present a valid permanent resident card (Form I-551), or other valid evidence of permanent residence status. A passport is not required.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What are the document requirements for Mexican citizens?</b></p> <p>Mexican citizens, including children, are required to present a passport with visa, or a Border Crossing Card. Mexican citizens may present a Border Crossing Card (BCC) as a stand-alone document for entry from Mexico only (by land or by pleasure vessel or ferry). The BCC also serves as a nonimmigrant visa, and together with a valid passport, it meets the documentary requirements for entry at all land, air, and sea ports of entry.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Is the Border Crossing Card (DSP-150) only acceptable for Mexican citizens traveling from Mexico? What about travel from Canada?</b></p> <p>The Border Crossing Card is acceptable as a stand-alone document (by itself) only for travel from Mexico by land, or by pleasure vessel or ferry. Together with a valid passport, though, it meets the documentary requirements for entry at all land, air, and sea ports of entry (to include travel from Canada).</p>
<p>▶ <b>How do these requirements affect First Responders or medical emergency situations?</b></p> <p>The implementation of WHTI does not prevent CBP from continuing to allow U.S. and foreign nationals without a WHTI-compliant document to enter the country on a case-by-case basis in the event of unforeseen medical or non-medical emergency situations, or in cases of humanitarian or national interest. This has been a common practice for decades, and allows expedited processing for unforeseen emergencies such as first responder action and patients involved in medical emergencies on both sides of the border. CBP port management will continue to coordinate with local emergency departments to ensure that local procedures are in place and emergency situations are facilitated.</p> <p>Please note however, that for emergency first response personnel who regularly and routinely cross the border into the United States, obtaining a passport or other acceptable alternative document is likely to be the most expedient means of crossing the border.</p>

<p>▶ <b>How will the new requirements affect passengers going on cruises?</b></p> <p>U.S. citizens who board a cruise ship at a port within the United States, travel only within the Western Hemisphere, and return to the same U.S. port on the same ship (referred to as a "closed loop" cruise), may present a government issued photo identification, along with proof of citizenship (an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or a Certificate of Naturalization).</p> <p>Please be aware that you may still be required to present a passport to enter the countries your cruise ship is visiting. Check with your cruise line to ensure you have the appropriate documents.</p>
<p>▶ <b>How are ferries and small boats (pleasure vessels) affected?</b></p> <p>Ferries and small boats are processed much like land travel, and all individuals traveling by these modes of travel are subject to the new requirements.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What if I have an I-68 registration? Will I still need a passport?</b></p> <p>Yes, boaters who have an I-68 form will still be required to abide by the new travel document requirements. Beginning June 1, 2009, Canadian Boat Landing (I-68) permits and Local Boater Option (LBO) registrations will only be issued to applicants presenting WHTI-compliant documents. I-68 permits and LBO registrations issued prior to June 1 will remain valid throughout 2009.</p> <p>Please note that a NEXUS card is an alternative to a passport, and ensuring that you have either a NEXUS card or a passport will enable you to continue to use telephone clearance procedures currently in place for I-68 holders. An I-68 form is similar to any kind of vehicle registration, and is not an identity document or a travel document.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Will travelers from U.S. territories need to present a passport to enter the United States?</b></p> <p>No. U.S. territories are considered a part of the United States. U.S. citizens traveling directly from a U.S. territory are not considered to have left the country 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.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What if I don't have an approved travel document?</b></p> <p>Travelers should apply for approved travel documents as soon as possible, as it can take several weeks to receive a document that will comply with new requirements under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.</p> <p>CBP is committed to working with travelers to ensure they have access to and can obtain appropriate travel documents. U.S. and Canadian citizens who lack WHTI-compliant documents but are otherwise admissible will not be denied entry into the United States on June 1, and are encouraged to continue with their travel plans and to obtain facilitative and secure WHTI travel documents as soon as possible. Travelers without the proper documents may be delayed while CBP officers work to confirm citizenship and identity.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What is a U.S. Passport Card?</b></p> <p>A U.S. Passport Card is a low-cost, limited-use travel document produced by the Department of State acceptable for land and sea travel to enter the United States from within the Western Hemisphere. The Passport Card was specifically designed to meet the unique challenges at the land borders. They currently are not accepted for international air travel. However, they can be used for identification purposes at TSA screening checkpoints for domestic air travel.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What is an Enhanced Driver's License?</b></p> <p>Enhanced Driver's Licenses (EDLs) are new, low cost, convenient travel documents that denote both identity and citizenship. (Enhanced Identification Cards, where available, are also WHTI compliant travel documents providing both proof of identity and citizenship.)</p> <p>Washington, Vermont, New York, and Michigan are issuing EDLs for U.S. citizens who are residents of their states, which may be used in addition to a passport to enter the United States from Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. EDLs contain features such as a radio frequency identification (RFID) chip and machine-readable zones that will facilitate the entry process at land and sea ports of entry. EDLs were specifically designed to meet the unique challenges at the land borders, and are not accepted for international air travel. However, they can be used for identification purposes at Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screening checkpoints for domestic air travel.</p> <p>British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec are issuing WHTI-compliant EDLs to Canadian citizens who are residents of their provinces.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Will I be able to use an Enhanced Driver's License at border crossings outside of my state or province?</b></p> <p>Yes. EDLs are acceptable for entry into the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean at any land or sea port of entry – not just at ports of entry in the issuing states or provinces.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What are the NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST programs?</b></p> <p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP's) Trusted Traveler Programs provide expedited cross-border travel for pre-approved, low risk travelers and commercial truck drivers through dedicated lanes and kiosks. Members in these voluntary programs must meet certain eligibility requirements and pay a five-year membership fee. NEXUS (the northern border program) and SENTRI (the southern border program) are for passengers; FAST (Free and Secure Trade) is the commercial equivalent for truck drivers.</p> <p>For a complete list of participating locations, eligibility requirements, and application information, please visit the "Travel" link at <a href="http://www.cbp.gov">www.cbp.gov</a> [1] and click "Trusted Traveler Programs."</p>
<p>▶ <b>Does a passport or other WHTI-compliant document have to be valid?</b></p> <p>Yes. In order to be WHTI-compliant, the document must be valid.</p> <p>For Canadian and Bermudian citizens, the document (passport, Enhanced Driver's License, or Trusted Traveler Program card) must be valid for the entire period of admission.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What if I don't have a valid, approved travel document?</b></p> <p>Travelers should apply for approved travel documents as soon as possible, as it can take several weeks to receive a document that will comply with new requirements under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.</p> <p>CBP is committed to working with travelers to ensure they have access to and can obtain appropriate travel documents. U.S. and Canadian citizens who lack WHTI-compliant documents but are otherwise admissible will not be denied entry into the United States on June 1, and are encouraged to continue with their travel plans and to obtain facilitative and secure WHTI travel documents as soon as possible. Travelers without the proper documents may be delayed while CBP officers work to confirm citizenship and identity.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Where can I go to obtain a passport or U.S. passport card?</b></p> <p>The Department of State issues passports and U.S. Passport Cards. Visit their web page at <a href="http://www.state.gov">www.state.gov</a> [2] for information on locations.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Where can I go to obtain a birth certificate?</b></p> <p>You may obtain a birth certificate by contacting the appropriate agency in the state where you were born. A listing of agencies may be found through the National Center for Health Statistics at <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nchs">www.cdc.gov/nchs</a> [3].</p>
<p>▶ <b>Does my birth certificate need to be a certified, original copy?</b></p> <p>CBP recommends that, where possible, an original or a certified copy of your birth certificate be presented. However, under certain circumstances, e.g., if you have sent the original in for a passport application, a copy may be accepted.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What happens if my documents are lost or stolen before I return to the United States? What happens if I don't have any documents when I need to cross the border back into the U.S. at a land or sea port of entry?</b></p> <p>CBP regularly handles unforeseen emergency situations in an appropriate manner and will continue to do so upon full WHTI implementation on June 1, 2009. CBP will continue to facilitate U.S. or Canadian citizens that need to return to their home country due to emergent circumstances but lack a WHTI-compliant document.</p> <p>U.S. citizens lacking WHTI-compliant documents will not be refused entry into the United States, but may be delayed as CBP officers work to verify identity and citizenship.</p>

<p>▶ <b>Why are travel requirements for land and sea travel to the US changing?</b></p> <p>The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) is the joint Department of State (DOS) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plan to implement the statutory mandates of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA).</p> <p>WHTI establishes document requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada, and Bermuda. Historically, U.S. and Canadian citizen travelers were able to offer an oral declaration alone or could present any of over 8,000 different documents to prove identity and citizenship. The 9/11 Commission recommended and Congress mandated the requirement that all travelers – including U.S. and Canadian citizens – present a passport or other secure document that denotes both citizenship and identity when entering the United States.</p> <p>This requirement was successfully implemented for air travel on January 23, 2007. Since then, compliance has been and continues to be extremely high – over 99%.</p>
<p>▶ <b>How will the Departments of Homeland Security and State increase the security of our borders without causing backups at the land borders?</b></p> <p>DHS and State are using vicinity Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for documents to meet WHTI requirements.</p> <p>The use of RFID-enabled travel documents helps speed processing at the border by providing CBP officers at land border ports with passenger and law enforcement information in advance of the traveler's arrival at the vehicle inspection booth.</p> <p>The technology also automates law enforcement checks to facilitate the processing of legitimate travelers while focusing attention on higher-risk individuals. This results in reduced processing time and a more secure process.</p> <p>RFID technology has been used successfully along our land borders with Canada and Mexico since 1995. Through trusted traveler programs, such as NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST, U.S. border officials are able to facilitate legitimate cross-border travel and trade. Today, RFID technology can be found in car keys, highway toll tags and security access cards.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Which websites should I visit for information on WHTI?</b></p> <p>For more information on WHTI document requirements, and links to related web sites, go to <a href="http://www.cbp.gov">www.cbp.gov</a> [1] or <a href="http://www.state.gov/travelers">www.state.gov/travelers</a> [4].</p>

<p>▶ <b>What is it, whom does it affect and when did it go into effect?</b></p> <p>The air portion of The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requires, with some exceptions, citizens of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda to present a passport to enter or depart the United States when arriving by air from any part of the Western Hemisphere.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Whom does the travel initiative affect?</b></p> <p>U.S. citizens need a passport to enter the United States by air from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, South and Central America, and the Caribbean (otherwise known as the Western Hemisphere).</p> <p>Also under this rule, citizens of Mexico, Canada, and Bermuda are required to have a passport when entering the United States by air.</p> <p>While United States citizens are currently required to have passports to enter most countries in Central and South America, this rule makes clear that the passport must be presented upon return to the United States as well.</p>
<p>▶ <b>When was the travel initiative implemented?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1: As of January 23, 2007, U.S. citizens and citizens of Canada, Mexico and Bermuda traveling by air between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda are required to present a valid passport to enter or depart the U.S.</li> <li>• Phase 2: As of June 1, 2009, U.S. and Canadian citizens who enter the U.S. at land and sea ports of entry from within the Western Hemisphere are required to present a WHTI-compliant travel document such as a valid passport, U.S. passport card, Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS/SENTRI/FAST) or an Enhanced Driver's License. Verbal claims of citizenship and identity alone are no longer sufficient to establish traveler and citizenship for entry into the United States.</li> </ul>
<p>▶ <b>How do I get a passport?</b></p> <p>United States citizens can visit the U.S. State Department's Travel [4] website, or call the U.S. National Passport Information Center: 1-877-4USA-PPT; TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793. Additionally, instructions for obtaining a passport are available through the U.S. Postal Service.</p> <p>Please allow a sufficient amount of time to apply and receive the passport in advance of travel. Processing of the passport application takes approximately six to eight weeks. If you need to travel urgently and require a passport sooner, please visit the U.S. State Department's Travel [4] website for additional information.</p> <p>Peak domestic passport processing is between January and July. For faster service, we recommend applying between August and December. U.S. citizens living outside the U.S. should contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.</p> <p>Foreign nationals should contact their respective governments to obtain passports.</p>
<p>▶ <b>How many U.S. citizens currently hold passports?</b></p> <p>According to the State Department, approximately 109 million citizens hold U.S. passports.</p>
<p>▶ <b>How are U.S. lawful permanent residents (LPRs) affected by the passport requirement?</b></p> <p>LPRs are 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.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What if I am an LPR but my children are U.S. Citizens?</b></p> <p>Children who are U.S. Citizens need to obtain a passport even if their parents are Green Card holders.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What do I need to travel to Canada or Mexico?</b></p> <p>Different countries may have different travel document requirements. It is best to check with the country you are visiting to determine the appropriate travel document requirements (for instance, whether you need a passport and/or visa). You can find out more by referring to the State Department website.</p>
<p>▶ <b>I am a Mexican citizen and have a valid Border Crossing Card (BCC). Am I required to also present a passport to travel to the United States by air?</b></p> <p>Yes. Under this final rule, Mexican citizens, just like U.S., Canadian and Bermudian citizens, are required to present a passport for air travel. The BCC, while currently serving in lieu of a passport and visa for land border crossings within the border region, may also be used as a visitor's visa. However, due to the unique circumstances of air travel, it was felt that the additional presentation of a passport was necessary.</p>
<p>▶ <b>What happens to persons who attempt to enter or re-enter the country without a passport or an alternative travel document?</b></p> <p>For the general public, people who apply for entry but do not have appropriate documentation will likely be referred for secondary screening at the port. In secondary, Customs and Border Protection officers will evaluate evidence of citizenship or identity the individual may have and will verify all information against available databases. For foreign nationals, a determination will be made at that time whether to admit the individual. However, to prevent delay at the ports of entry, we would encourage all travelers to obtain the appropriate documents before they travel.</p> <p>In addition, the State Department has processes to assist U.S. citizens overseas to obtain emergency travel documentation for those with lost or stolen passports.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Do travelers from U.S. territories need to present a passport to enter the United States?</b></p> <p>No. These territories are a part of the United States. U.S. citizens returning directly from a U.S. territory are not considered to have left the U.S. 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. If the traveler also visited non-U.S. territories, he/she is required to present a passport.</p> <p>Although U.S. citizens are not required to present a passport when departing U.S. territories and traveling to the mainland, having evidence of citizenship (e.g., U.S. passport, birth certificate, Trusted Traveler Program card) or lawful permanent residence (e.g., green card) available will help CBP expedite your customs processing.</p> <p>Additionally, although not required to present a passport, travelers departing the U.S. territories for the U.S. mainland are subject to customs and agriculture restrictions. Travelers are entitled to a \$1,600 duty-free exemption, as long as they remained in the U.S. territories for 48 hours or longer. After the \$1,600 duty-free exemption, travelers will be required to pay a flat rate of 1.5% on the next \$1,000 worth of goods purchased.</p> <p>CBP officers may also conduct baggage checks or ask additional questions as part of standard inspections of outbound passengers, to prevent any non-native species of plants, pests or plant diseases, which may be present in one of the islands from being introduced to the mainland. For example, a pre-departure examination is performed on all passengers and cargo moving from Hawaii to the mainland U.S. The purpose of this examination is to prevent movement of fruit flies and fruit fly host material. These rules also apply to Caribbean islands, including the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. For more information on what agricultural goods can be brought from U.S. territories and Hawaii, please visit the USDA website.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Does the passport requirement affect offshore U.S. citizens or LPR fishermen?</b></p> <p>The passport requirement does not apply to U.S. citizens or LPR's who fish offshore, so long as they do not land in foreign soil.</p> <p>For example, someone fishing in the Caribbean would only have to present a passport upon return if they traveled from a U.S. state or territory (Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, and the U.S. Virgin Islands consist of St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix, and Water Island, and many smaller islands) and landed in Jamaica, the Bahamas, or any non-U.S. territory.</p> <p>Nonresident aliens may not be employed aboard any U.S.-based fishing vessel as "D" crew members.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Other than a passport, what types of documents are acceptable for air travel?</b></p> <p>Individuals traveling by air within the Western Hemisphere are required to present a passport for admission to the U.S. with limited exceptions.</p> <p>This Final Rule outlines two additional documents that are acceptable for air travel. The first is the Merchant Mariner Document (MMD) issued by the U.S. Coast Guard that will be acceptable for use under WHTI by U.S. citizen merchant mariners traveling on official business. The other document is the NEXUS card, for which enrollment is limited to citizens of Canada and the United States, lawful permanent residents of the United States and permanent residents of Canada.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Can the NEXUS card be used at any air location?</b></p> <p>NEXUS cards will only be accepted in conjunction with the NEXUS program at designated NEXUS sites.</p>
<p>▶ <b>How are members of the U.S. armed forces affected by the passport requirement?</b></p> <p>There are no changes proposed for members of the U.S. armed forces traveling on active duty.</p> <p>Currently, an individual traveling as a member of the United States armed forces on active duty is not required to present a valid passport to enter or depart the United States. There are no changes under the air rule for members of the U.S. armed forces.</p> <p>This does not apply to spouses and dependents of these military members. Spouses and dependents are required to present a passport (and valid visa, if applicable) when traveling into the United States under WHTI.</p>
<p>▶ <b>How are members of the NATO Armed Forces affected by the passport requirement?</b></p> <p>There are no changes proposed for members of the U.S. armed forces traveling on active duty.</p> <p>Currently, an individual traveling as a member of the United States armed forces on active duty is not required to present a valid passport to enter or depart the United States. There are no changes under the air rule for members of the U.S. armed forces. Any future changes, if necessary, will be addressed during the second phase of the WHTI rulemaking process.</p> <p>This does not apply to spouses and dependents of these military members. Spouses and dependents will be required to present a passport (and valid visa, if applicable) when traveling into the United States under WHTI.</p>
<p>▶ <b>Do the documentation requirements apply to children?</b></p> <p>Yes, all children ranging in age from birth to 18 years-of-age are required to present their own passport when entering the United States at airports.</p>