Travelers from Visa Waiver Program Countries
New Passport and Immigration Document Submission Requirements

International travelers seeking to travel to the United States without a visa, who are nationals of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries (see attached list), should review this important information on: 1) traveler passport requirements under the VWP, and 2) a new requirement for submitting an immigration form electronically and in advance of travel.

Machine-Readable And Biometric Passports

All VWP travelers, regardless of age or type of passport used, must present a **machine-readable passport (MRP)**. This requirement became effective June 26, 2005, and previous one-time exemptions for VWP travelers without MRPs ended on that date.

An MRP contains two lines of text with numbers and chevrons (<<<) at the bottom of the personal information page with the passport bearer's picture. In addition, depending on when VWP travelers' passports were issued, other passport requirements apply as follows:

- **Machine-readable passports issued or renewed/extended on or after 10/26/06 – require an integrated chip with information from the data page in addition to a digital photograph.**
- **Machine-readable passports issued or renewed/extended between 10/26/05 and 10/25/06 – require a digital photograph printed on the data page _or_ integrated chip with information from the data page.**
- **Machine-readable passports issued or renewed/extended before 10/26/05 – no further requirements.**

Temporary, emergency, official and diplomatic passports are exempted from biometric digital photo and chip requirements, but must be machine-readable. However, German temporary or emergency passports are not included in this biometric e-passport exemption. Therefore, holders of German temporary or emergency passports must either obtain a valid, machine-readable regular German passport for VWP travel or apply for a U.S. visa to travel to or through the United States. If a traveler cannot meet all of the requirements, he or she must obtain a visa for entry to the United States, and cannot travel without a visa on VWP.

Expansion of Visa Waiver Program

The State Department and DHS announced that nationals of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Republic of Korea and the Slovak Republic will be able to travel without a visa for tourist and business travel of 90 days or less **beginning on November 17, 2008** provided they possess a biometric passport and register on-line through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). Prior to this date, travelers will still require a visa.

New Program – Electronic System for Travel Authorization ("ESTA")

Until recently all travelers coming to the United States, including those traveling under the Visa Waiver Program, were required to fill out a paper immigration form (Form I-94) and submit it to U.S. immigration officials upon arrival at a U.S. port of entry. Usually this form would be completed by the traveler during the flight to the U.S.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently implemented a new program affecting VWP travelers that requires them to submit the I-94 information electronically and in advance of their travel, utilizing a new but similar form, **I-94W**. This program, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), began to accept voluntary ESTA applications starting on August 1, 2008 but will become mandatory on January 12th, 2009, for all travelers from VWP countries. Authorization requests should be made as soon as travel is planned to avoid unexpected delays. Approved authorizations are valid for two years unless the applicant's passport is renewed - a new authorization request would then be required. The link in 13 different languages for information about ESTA is:
http://cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/esta_intro/, and the application can be found at:
https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/esta.html?_flowExecutionKey=_c0C2ADC55-BEEB-71AE-241E-673183688C78_kEF3969B1-6C56-06EC-F41A-94A99134A186

For complete information on the Visa Waiver Program, please visit travel.state.gov.

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

Participating Countries

1. Andorra
2. Austria
3. Australia
4. Belgium
5. Brunei
6. Denmark
7. Finland
8. France
9. Germany
10. Iceland
11. Ireland
12. Italy
13. Japan
14. Liechtenstein
15. Luxembourg
16. Monaco
17. Netherlands
18. New Zealand
19. Norway
20. Portugal
21. San Marino
22. Singapore
23. Slovenia
24. Spain
25. Sweden
26. Switzerland
27. United Kingdom

To be added November 17th, 2008
28. Czech Republic
29. Estonia
30. Latvia
31. Lithuania
32. Hungary
33. Republic of Korea
34. Slovak Republic

Summary of VWP Travel Requirements:

To enter the US on the Visa Waiver Program, the traveler must: (1) be seeking entry for 90 days or less as a temporary visitor; (2) be a citizen of a visa waiver country; (3) have a valid machine-readable or biometric passport issued by a visa waiver country; and (4) have completed a nonimmigrant waiver arrival-departure record under the new ESTA program.