

**EMPLOYEE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT
OFFICIAL UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PASSPORTS**

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) travel policy on the use of official United States Government passports (hereafter referred to as "official passport") for foreign travel on official government business. VA's policy on official passports was formerly contained in MP-1, part II, chapter 2, paragraph 5.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This directive sets forth policies and responsibilities for the use of official passports for foreign travel while conducting official VA business. This directive contains:

a. A policy statement regarding the mandatory use of an official passport when traveling abroad on VA business.

b. Authority of the Travel Policy Division to request official passports for VA employees traveling abroad on VA business, as well as visas where required, and country clearances from the applicable United States embassy.

c. Information on the custody of official passports.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Travel Policy Division (047GC3), Office of Financial Policy, Office of Finance.

4. RELATED HANDBOOKS: VA handbooks in the 0631 series.

5. RESCISSIONS: MP-1, part II, chapter 2, paragraph 5, dated February 28, 1995.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Robert N. McFarland
Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/
William A. Moorman
Acting Assistant Secretary for Management

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OFFICIAL UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PASSPORTS

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this directive is to provide policy on the use of official United States Government passports (hereafter referred to as “official passport”) for foreign travel to conduct government business.

2. POLICY

a. All official passports, required entry visas, and country clearance requests will be processed through the Travel Policy Division (047GC3), Office of Financial Policy.

b. VA travelers are required to apply for and use an official passport when traveling on official government business in any foreign country, including travel to Canada and Mexico. Personal passports are not authorized for official government travel in any foreign country.

c. Prior to any foreign travel in the discharge of official duties, VA travelers must receive permission from the Department of State to travel to the applicable country.

d. Prior to processing any requests for an official passport, VA travelers must submit to the Travel Policy Division, at least 1 month in advance of the departure date, evidence of the approval of foreign travel and pertinent information regarding the trip.

e. VA travelers must comply with the foreign travel approval procedures of their respective administration or staff office.

f. VA will request the issuance of an official passport for immediate family members of VA employees on permanent assignment to foreign locations. Such passports are covered by the same policy and procedures as those issued to VA employees.

g. Where required for entry, VA travelers will obtain a visa when traveling on official government business.

h. Country clearance information will be submitted to the applicable United States embassy prior to embarking on any official foreign travel.

i. All official passports are the property of the United States Government and must be returned to the Travel Policy Division (047GC3), Office of Financial Policy within 5 days of the end of official travel. The Travel Policy Division is the custodian of official passports and keeps them in a secure location when not in use for foreign travel.

j. Official passports are valid for foreign travel abroad only while the traveler remains in the official status for which the official passport was issued or the visa endorsed.

k. Official passports may not be used for personal travel.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES. The responsibilities for official passports, visas, and country clearances are as follows:

a. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Assistant Secretaries and Other Key Officials in Central Office, and Network/area/field facility directors are responsible for:

(1) ensuring that information on issuance, use and return of official passports is disseminated within their organizations and that employees adhere to VA policy in this regard.

(2) issuing supplemental policy and procedures for foreign travel and use of official passports which is consistent with the policy contained in this directive and the procedures of the accompanying handbook.

b. Supervisors are responsible for:

(1) ensuring that employees traveling to foreign locations to conduct official VA business apply for and/or possess an official passport;

(2) ensuring that upon completion of foreign travel to conduct official VA business, employees return the official passport to the custody of the Travel Policy Division;

(3) approving reimbursement for any necessary expense incurred by the traveler to obtain necessary pictures and documentation for an official passport or entry visa for the country visited.

c. Employees are responsible for:

(1) using an official passport for all foreign travel to conduct official VA business;

(2) safeguarding the official passport while in their possession;

(3) providing the Travel Policy Division with the correct application form, pictures, identification documents and any other information necessary for the SIA to issue the official passport;

(4) completing and forwarding to the Travel Policy Division any necessary visa application form for foreign travel to conduct VA business;

(5) completing and forwarding to the Travel Policy Division a country clearance request form to allow for a timely request for processing by the appropriate Department of State desk officer; and

(6) promptly returning the official passport to the Travel Policy Division for custody upon completion of foreign travel.

d. **Travel Policy Division (047GC3), Office of Financial Policy** is responsible for:

(1) developing policy and procedures on the use, issuance and maintenance of official passports;

(2) providing VA travelers with current information on the official passport application process;

(3) receiving and processing applications from VA travelers for official passports, including administering the required oath to those applicants who present themselves in person;

(4) preparing the sponsoring letter to the SIA to obtain an official passport, and submitting completed application packages to the SIA for processing;

(5) preparing sponsoring letters to the SIA to obtain visa endorsements when needed for foreign travel on official VA business, and submitting the official passport to the foreign consulates for visa endorsements;

(6) obtaining country clearance information from VA travelers and providing the country clearance information to the proper desk officer at the Department of State for processing;

(7) keeping VA travelers updated on the status of their official passport application, visa request and country clearance request; and

(8) accounting for and safeguarding official passports in its custody while the employee in whose name the official passport was issued is not traveling on official government business.

4. DEFINITIONS. Certain terms used in this handbook are defined as follows:

a. **Country Clearance.** The peremptory power of the Department of State to approve the travel abroad of officials of United States Government agencies.

b. **Official United States Government Passport.** A special, endorsed passport issued to employees of Federal government agencies to allow travel to foreign locations to conduct official business. Such passports are issued to the custody of the sponsoring agency at no fee and may only be used when traveling to foreign locations in the discharge of official duties. Official passports may also be issued to immediate family members of federal employees permanently assigned to duty stations in foreign locations.

c. **Special Issuance Agency (SIA).** The Division of the Department of State delegated the authority to issue official United States Government and diplomatic

passports, and request visa endorsements from foreign consulates on behalf of federal travelers conducting official business in foreign countries.

d. **Visa.** An endorsement made on a passport by the proper authorities denoting that it has been examined and that the bearer may proceed to enter a foreign country.

5. REFERENCES. Title 22, United States Code, chapter 4; title 22, Code of Federal Regulations, chapter I, part 51.