



# USCIS Update

January 16, 2008  
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## USCIS Receipt Delay and Processing Delay Frequently Asked Questions

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) advises customers that, due to a tremendous increase in the number of applications filed, the processing of fee payments and entry of cases into our tracking system has been running behind schedule. However, we are now current with receipting all forms. The following questions and answers provide additional information:

### **1. What caused USCIS' application receipt and processing delays?**

USCIS received a significant increase in filings from customers who sought to take advantage of the lower fees that were in effect prior to the agency's planned July 30, 2007, fee increase and because of an influx of applications associated with visa availability in the July 2007 Visa Bulletin. This resulted in a magnitude of applications and fees that exceeded USCIS' ability to issue receipts on a timely basis, deposit application fees and process applications within the agency's planned timeframes.

### **2. When can I expect USCIS to process my case?**

USCIS processes applications in the order they are received by application type. Due to the significant increase in the number of applications filed, processing times have been affected. As a result, average processing times for certain application types filed after June 1, 2007, may become longer. For example:

- Naturalization applications may take approximately 16-18 months to process;
- Family-based adjustment-of-status applications may take 10-12 months; and
- Immigrant petitions for relatives and workers may take 9-10 months.

Application processing times are accessible from the [www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov) home page. Processing times are an estimate of how long it will take to complete your case. Each case is different, and some cases may take longer to process than others. You can use your receipt (I-797) to check the status of your case using Case Status Online. Please note that USCIS will only process requests for case status information if it is beyond posted processing times. We encourage you to check processing times, which are updated monthly, before inquiring about your case.

### **3. What can I do if the information on my receipt notice is incorrect?**

The information you provided on your application is entered into our system, however, sometimes an error occurs. Please call the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 to request a correction.

#### **4. How is USCIS addressing these delays?**

USCIS has realigned resources to eliminate the delay as quickly as possible so it can focus on processing applications. This effort includes increasing the number of contract employees and employing significant overtime and shift work. USCIS also has temporarily detailed staff to centers that have been affected the most by the large influx of cases.

USCIS is also hiring an additional 1,500 employees to address the processing of these cases.

#### **5. I received my receipt notice, but when I check my case online it does not appear. How do I get my case added to the system so I can check its progress?**

USCIS had an unprecedented number of applications filed over the summer. Our efforts to enter these applications into our systems have caused a delay in the transfer of information from our case control system to the Case Status Online system. We are experiencing delays of up to 3 to 4 weeks between receipting your application and its status being available on [www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov). If you have additional questions after your information is available on Case Status Online, please call the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.

#### **6. How do I change my address while I wait to receive a receipt notice?**

If you have a pending application, but have not received a receipt notice, you must call USCIS' National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 to report a change of address. Please inform the customer service representative that you have a pending application and have not received a receipt notice, but would like to change your address. You should also tell the representative when you filed your application to USCIS. USCIS will issue a service request which will be routed to the USCIS Service Center or District Office having jurisdiction over your application. A letter acknowledging the completion of your change of address request will be sent out once your application is receipted and your change of address has been updated.

Additionally, customers are required to complete a Form AR-11 to notify USCIS that their address has changed. Customers can access USCIS' Change of Address Online tool to complete an AR-11 without a receipt number.

#### **7. What if I need advance parole?**

USCIS is up-to-date with receipting Form I-131 applications. If special circumstances exist and advance parole is needed quickly, please make an InfoPass appointment to visit a local USCIS office or call the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283. If an expedite request for an advance parole travel document is necessary, be prepared to provide: the need for urgent travel, the date the application was received at the Service Center where you filed, and the U.S. Postal Service tracking number, if you have one, associated with the original application file.

#### **8. Do individuals with a valid H or L nonimmigrant visa need a receipt notice to travel?**

On November 1, 2007, USCIS published a final rule that certain "H" and "L" nonimmigrants who applied for adjustment of status to become permanent residents no longer need to present a receipt notice (Form I-797, Notice of Action) when returning to the United States from travel abroad.; The purpose of the rule is to eliminate the unnecessary burden of presenting this receipt since the application information in the receipt is in USCIS databases available to immigration inspectors and adjudicators.

Applicants for re-admission to the United States must provide evidence to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Inspector at the port of entry that they are:

- Still eligible for H-1 or L-1 status;
- Coming to resume employment with the same employer for whom they were previously employed; and
- In possession of a valid H-1 or L-1 visa, if required.

In the case of H-4 or L-2 dependents, the spouse or parent through whom they received their H-4 or L-2 status must meet the above requirements and the dependent must remain eligible for admission in H-4 or L-2 classification.

For more information, contact the USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.

**9. If I filed before the new fee change and my application was rejected, do I need to pay the new higher fee?**

Yes, unless USCIS rejected your application in error. If you think your application was rejected in error, please resubmit your original application, your original check or money order, the cover letter that was included with your returned application, and an explanation of the reason why you believe the rejection was in error. The resubmission should be sent to the address indicated on the rejection notice and marked "Attention: CRU."

**10. If I filed before the new July 30 fee increase and my check was returned for insufficient funds, will I have to pay the new fees when I reapply?**

If USCIS is notified that your check for an application fee has been returned due to insufficient funds, your case will be placed in suspense. You will be notified by mail and asked to submit a new payment along with a \$30 administrative fee. If you do so within 14 days, USCIS will honor the original filing date and processing of your case will resume.

**11. I filed my Form I-130 (Application for Alien Relative) at a Service Center, but received a receipt notice from the Chicago Lockbox. Why is that?**

This internal procedure was implemented by USCIS to improve efficiency and does not adversely affect your case. The return address on the mailing envelope will be from the Chicago Lockbox, but the receipt notice will identify the Service Center that will process your case. Please pay close attention to the receipt number to ensure all future communication is directed to the actual processing location. If the receipt number begins with "VSC," your case will be processed by the Vermont Service Center; likewise, if the receipt number begins with "CSC," your case will be processed by the California Service Center.

If the Service Center forwarded your case to the Chicago Lockbox for receipting, but it was rejected, the reject notice will be issued by the Chicago Lockbox. If you believe your petition was rejected in error, resubmit your original petition with supporting documentation, your original check or money order, the cover letter that was included with your returned petition, and an explanation of the reason why you believe the rejection was in error. The resubmission should be sent to the Chicago Lockbox, using the address indicated on the rejection notice.

Two separate post office box addresses (see below) have been established that correspond to the appropriate USCIS Service Center (either Vermont or California) that will process and adjudicate the petition. Although Form I-130 must be filed with the Chicago Lockbox, petitioners will receive receipt notices from either the Vermont or California Service Center.

Petitioners who reside in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin or Wyoming must file their stand-alone Form I-130s with the Lockbox using the following address:

**USCIS  
P.O. Box 804625  
Chicago, IL 60680-1029**

Petitioners who reside in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, West Virginia or District of Columbia must file their stand-alone Form I-130 with the Lockbox using the following address:

**USCIS  
P.O. Box 804616  
Chicago, IL 60680-1029**

The revised form and filing instructions are available through the USCIS' Web site at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).