

DHS: New Border Procedures Fast Approaching

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is reminding travelers that the Jan. 31, 2008 deadline is fast approaching when improved border identification procedures will be implemented.

Unlike current land and sea border procedures, on Jan. 31, DHS will require travelers entering the United States through these entry points to present documents denoting citizenship and identity.

A DHS release quotes Secretary Michael Chertoff on the changes:

“For the safety of the American people, the United States cannot have an honor system at the border,” said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. “Requiring secure and reliable documentation at our borders will drastically reduce security vulnerabilities posed by permitting entry based on oral declarations alone. As travelers become accustomed to carrying documents to cross the border, and as we move to more stringent documentation requirements, our border officers will be able to more quickly and confidently identify cross-border travelers.”

In-Brief: What's Going to Happen

DHS intends to end the routine practice of accepting oral declarations alone at land and sea ports of entry. On Jan. 31, 2008, U.S. and Canadian citizens will need to present either a WHTI (Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative)-compliant document or a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver’s license, plus proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate. DHS also proposes to begin alternative procedures for U.S. and Canadian children at that time.

For those who have questions (many travelers surely will), DHS has put out some FAQs on these new changes.

UPDATED -- Friday, January 25, 2008 at 14:05 EST

Our office just received this information from the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office . . .

Important Change in International Land and Sea Travel Document Procedures

Effective January 31, 2008, U.S. and Canadian citizens ages 19 and older should no longer expect that they will be able to prove identity and citizenship by relying on an oral declaration alone. Instead, travelers will be asked to present documents from one of the options below when entering the United States at land or sea ports of entry. Travelers who do not present one of the documents listed below may be delayed as U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers attempt to verify their identity and citizenship.

U.S. and Canadian Citizens – Single Document Option

One of the following documents should be presented to prove both identity and citizenship.

Acceptable Documents as of January 31:

- U.S. or Canadian Passport
U.S. Passport Card (Available spring 2008)*

- Trusted Traveler Cards (NEXUS, SENTRI, or FAST)*

- State or Provincial Issued Enhanced Driver's License (when available – this secure driver's license will denote identity and citizenship.)*

- Enhanced Tribal Cards (when available)*

- U.S. Military Identification with Military Travel Orders

- U.S. Merchant Mariner Document

- Native American Tribal Photo Identification Card

- Form I-872 American Indian Card

- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) Card

* Frequent Land Border Crossers — to expedite processing into the United States, U.S. Customs and Border Protection recommends using one of the above asterisked documents.

U.S. and Canadian Citizens – Two Document Option

All U.S. and Canadian citizens who do not have one of the documents from the list above must present BOTH an identification and citizenship document from each of the columns below.

Identification Documents*

Driver's license or identification card issued by a federal, state, provincial, county, territory, or municipal authority
U.S. or Canadian military identification card

* All identification documents must have a photo, name and date of birth.

Citizenship Documents

- U.S. or Canadian birth certificate issued by a federal, state, provincial, county, territory or municipal authority
- U.S. Consular report of birth abroad
- U.S. Certificate of Naturalization
- U.S. Certificate of Citizenship
- U.S. Citizen Identification Card
- Canadian Citizenship Card
- Canadian certificate of citizenship without photo

U.S. and Canadian Citizens – Procedures for Children

Effective January 31, 2008, U.S. and Canadian citizen children ages 18 and under will be expected to present a birth certificate issued by a federal, state, provincial, county or municipal authority.

For Travelers Other than U.S. and Canadian Citizens

All existing nonimmigrant visa and passport requirements will remain in effect and will not be altered by the changes that

are implemented on January 31, 2008.

U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents

Permanent Resident Card (I-551) or other valid evidence of lawful permanent residence is required.

Mexican Citizens

Mexican citizens, including children, must present a valid passport and a B-1/B-2 nonimmigrant visa or a Border Crossing Card.

Know Your Destination Country Document Requirements

It is strongly recommended that all travelers leaving the U.S. verify the specific documentary requirements for their destination country. This information is available through the Department of State website or by consulting with the Embassy of the country you are visiting to determine what documents are needed to meet the entry requirements of that country. These requirements could include a birth certificate, passport, or passport and visa for entry into that country.

Travelers who do not present one of the documents listed may be delayed as U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers attempt to verify their citizenship and identity.