



# Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

## **Travel Document Requirements for Entry Into the United States by Land or Sea**

### ***Background***

#### **What is the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative?**

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.

#### **What requirements changed on June 1, 2009?**

U.S., Canadian, and Bermudian citizens must now present approved travel documents when entering the United States at land or sea ports of entry.

#### **Why is WHTI being implemented for land and sea travel?**

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.

### ***Travel Document Requirements***

#### **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?**

*U.S. citizen adult travelers* can present a valid:

- U.S. Passport;

- Passport Card;
- Enhanced Driver's License;
- Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST);
- U.S. Military identification card when traveling on official orders;
- U.S. Merchant Mariner document when traveling on official business; or
- Form I-872 American Indian Card; or
- Enhanced Tribal Card (when available).

*Canadian citizen adult travelers* can present a valid:

- Canadian passport;
- Enhanced Driver's License; or
- Trusted Traveler Program card (NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST).

### **What is required for U.S. and Canadian children?**

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.

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.

The group should provide, on organizational letterhead:

- The name of the group and supervising adult.
- A list of the children on the trip, the primary home address, phone number, date of birth, place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child.
- 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.

### **How do WHTI document requirements affect Native Americans?**

The American Indian Card (Form I-872) is currently a WHTI-compliant document for entry by land or sea.

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.

### **What about military personnel?**

U.S. citizen 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.

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.

### **What is required for Bermudian citizens?**

*All Bermudian citizens* are required to present a valid passport issued by Bermuda or the United Kingdom.

### **Whose document requirements are not affected by this change?**

WHTI does not affect document requirements for Mexican citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents.

### **What are the document requirements for U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents?**

U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents are still required to present a valid permanent resident card (Form I-551), or other valid evidence of permanent residence status. A passport is not required.

### **What are the document requirements for Mexican citizens?**

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.

### **Is the Border Crossing Card (DSP-150) only acceptable for Mexican citizens traveling from Mexico? What about travel from Canada?**

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).

### **How do these requirements affect First Responders or medical emergency situations?**

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.

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.

### **Traveling by Sea**

#### **How will the new requirements affect passengers going on cruises?**

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).

*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.

#### **How are ferries and small boats (pleasure vessels) affected?**

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.

#### **What if I have an I-68 registration? Will I still need a passport?**

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.

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 telephonic 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.

### **Will travelers from U.S. territories need to present a passport to enter the United States?**

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.

### ***Approved Travel Documents***

#### **What if I don't have an approved travel document?**

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.

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.*

#### **What is a U.S. Passport Card?**

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.

#### **What is an Enhanced Driver's License?**

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.)

Washington, Vermont, New York, and Michigan are issuing EDLs for U.S. citizens who are residents of their states, which may be used instead of a passport to enter the United State 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.

British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec are issuing WHTI-compliant EDLs to Canadian citizens who are residents of their provinces.

**Will I be able to use an Enhanced Driver’s License at border crossings outside of my state or province?**

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.

**How do I find out if my state is offering Enhanced Driver’s Licenses, (or an Enhanced ID Card), which can be used to enter the US at land and sea ports of entry?**

Visit the web site [www.getyouhome.gov](http://www.getyouhome.gov) for information on EDL cost, validity, and issuing agencies, and links to the appropriate state government websites.

**What are the NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST programs?**

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.

For a complete list of participating locations, eligibility requirements, and application information, please visit the “Travel” link at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) and click “Trusted Traveler Programs.”

**Does a passport or other WHTI-compliant document have to be valid?**

Yes. In order to be WHTI-compliant, the document must be valid.

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.

### **What if I don't have a valid, approved travel document?**

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.

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.*

### **Where can I go to obtain a passport or U.S. passport card?**

The Department of State issues passports and U.S. Passport Cards. Visit their web page at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) for information on locations.

### **Where can I go to obtain a birth certificate?**

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 [www.cdc.gov/nchs](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs).

### **Does my birth certificate need to be a certified, original copy?**

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.

### **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 US at a land or sea port of entry?**

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.

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.

## **Legislative Background**

### **Why are travel requirements for land and sea travel to the US changing?**

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). 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.

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%.

### **How will the Departments of Homeland Security and State increase the security of our borders without causing backups at the land borders?**

DHS and DOS are using vicinity Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for documents to meet WHTI requirements.

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. 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.

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.

### **Which web sites should I visit for information on WHTI?**

For more information on WHTI document requirements, and links to related web sites, go to [www.getyouhome.gov](http://www.getyouhome.gov) and [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).