

## Departments of Homeland Security and State Certify Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Criteria



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The U.S. Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and State (DOS) announced today that their efforts have enabled the departments to jointly certify to Congress that all statutory criteria have been met prior to implementing the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) at land and sea borders on June 1, 2009.

WHTI is a joint DHS-DOS plan to implement a core 9/11 Commission recommendation, which Congress subsequently passed into law in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. Upon implementation of WHTI, travelers will be required to present a single WHTI-compliant document denoting *both* citizenship and identity when seeking entry into the United States through a land or sea border. Children under the age of 16 will need to present an original or copy of their birth certificate or other proof of citizenship. Standardized, secure and reliable documentation will enable U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers to quickly and accurately identify travelers at land and sea ports of entry. The WHTI secure document requirement is already in place for all air travelers, and applies to travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada and Bermuda. These land and sea document requirements will be effective June 1, 2009.

Many cross-border travelers already have WHTI-compliant documents such as a Passport, Passport Card or a Trusted Traveler Card (NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST), or an enhanced driver's license (EDL) currently issued by the states of Washington, New York, and Vermont and the Province of British Columbia. The State of Michigan and additional Canadian provinces will be issuing EDLs in the coming months – all of which are options specifically designed for land and sea border use.

To implement WHTI as planned on June 1, DHS and DOS needed to certify that the eight criteria have been met:

- the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) certifies that DHS and DOS have selected a card
  architecture that meets or exceeds International Organization for Standardization (ISO) security standards and best
  available practices for protection of personal identification documents while being compatible with U.S. Customs
  and Border Protection's infrastructure;
- ii. the technology to be used by the United States for the passport card, and any subsequent change to that technology, has been shared with the Governments of Canada and Mexico;
- iii. an agreement has been reached with the United States Postal Service on the fee to be charged individuals for the passport card, and a detailed justification has been submitted to Congress;
- iv. an alternative procedure has been developed for groups of children traveling across an international border under adult supervision with parental consent;
- v. the necessary technological infrastructure to process the passport cards has been installed, and all employees at ports of entry have been properly trained in the use of the new technology;
- vi. the passport card has been made available;
- vii. a single implementation date for sea and land borders has been established; and
- viii. the signing of a memorandum of agreement to initiate a pilot program with not less than one state on an enhanced driver's license to meet the documentation requirements for entry into the United States from Canada or Mexico at land and sea ports of entry.

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