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DHS Entry-Exit System Meets 2004 Goals Ahead of Schedule



Release Date: 01/03/05 00:00:00

For Immediate Release

Office of the Press Secretary

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January 03, 2005

Asa Hutchinson, Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security at the United States Department of Homeland Security, announced today that the Department of Homeland Security met a major milestone by implementing the US-VISIT entry-exit system at the 50 busiest land ports of entry ahead of schedule. Congress mandated that DHS complete this phase of an entry-exit system by December 31, 2004. As of December 29, 2004, US-VISIT was operational at the 50 busiest land border ports. The first results indicate that these new US-VISIT biometric procedures at land border ports of entry are also saving visitors time crossing the border.

This decrease in inspection time is the result of automating the Form I-94 process and US VISIT's simple, fast and clean biometric processing.

"US VISIT is expediting the processing time for those visitors who are subject to US-VISIT procedures at land ports of entry," said Asa Hutchinson. "The process, which in Laredo, TX, took more than 10 minutes before US-VISIT was implemented, now takes less than five minutes."

"The effectiveness of US-VISIT has meant that we have been able to deploy the technology on schedule while meeting our goals of enhanced security and the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade," he said. "This is a step towards our vision of creating a 21st century border and immigration management system."

The United States has been able to arrest or deny admission to 372 criminals or immigration violators because of US-VISIT. These included federal penitentiary escapees, convicted rapists, drug traffickers, individuals convicted of manslaughter and credit card fraud, a convicted armed robber and numerous immigration violators and individuals attempting visa fraud.

To date, more than 16.9 million foreign visitors have been processed through US VISIT without adversely impacting wait times. In addition to the 50 busiest land ports of entry, US-VISIT is operational at 115 airports and 15 seaports and will be expanded to all land ports of entry by December 31, 2005.

Visitors requiring an arrival/departure Form I-94 to enter the United States, including those traveling under the Visa Waiver Program, are processed through US-VISIT at the secondary inspection area.

US-VISIT processing involves the collection of two index fingerscans and a digital photograph. With the deployment of US-VISIT technology, a visitor is no longer required to fill out the Form I-94 by hand. Instead, the visitor's biographic information is entered electronically when the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer scans the visitor's travel document.

US-VISIT procedures do not apply at this time to visitors processed in the primary inspection area, but apply to foreign visitors who must be processed in the secondary inspection areas. At land ports of entry, the secondary inspection area is

where visitors traveling with visas or passports are processed. In addition to exempt Canadian citizens, most Mexican visitors who apply for admission using a Border Crossing Card (also known as a laser visa) and travel within the border zone will not be processed through US VISIT initially.

The goals of US-VISIT are to enhance the security of our citizens and visitors; facilitate legitimate travel and trade; ensure the integrity of our immigration system; and protect the privacy of our visitors.

US-VISIT is a continuum of security measures that begins overseas, when a person applies for a visa to travel to the United States, and continues through entry and exit.

Experience has shown that the US-VISIT enrollment process is fast, easy to understand and simple for visitors.

Expanding US-VISIT entry procedures to our land ports of entry builds on the Department's progress to enhance security for our citizens and visitors while facilitating legitimate travel and trade through our borders.

For more information, visit www.dhs.gov/us-visit.

This page was last reviewed/modified on 01/03/05 00:00:00.