



Media Note
Office of the Spokesman
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Passport Production at Record Levels to Meet Demand

The Department of State set new records in March and April, issuing more than three million passports to Americans planning international travel. With passport demand at record levels, passport production time averages 10-12 weeks. Americans should apply at least twelve weeks before they plan to travel.

Passport Production: For the first seven months (October through April) of Fiscal Year 2007, the Department issued 8.6 million passports. This is a 33 percent increase from the same period last year and is more passports than were issued in any single full year before 2003.

Arkansas Passport Center: The newest passport mega-processing center, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, began pilot operations on March 27 and ramped up production in April. When the Center reaches full capacity by the end of 2007, the Center will be able to produce more than 10 million passports per year. The Center has already printed more than 80,000 passports for American citizen travelers.

This center represents a dynamic, new approach to the production of passports for Americans. Other domestic passport agencies will electronically transmit approved applications to the Arkansas Passport Center, which is dedicated solely to printing and mailing out large quantities of passports. By centralizing passport printing the Department will focus resources at other agencies on processing and adjudicating more passport applications.

Increased Staffing: Aggressive recruitment brought 170 new government and contract employees onboard during March and April, and retirees with passport adjudication experience are returning to help our efforts. The Department continues to recruit qualified personnel to meet America's demands for passports.

Regional Agencies Working Overtime: Employees at the 18 Passport Agencies nationwide continue to work overtime daily and on weekends to process applications to meet Americans' travel plans.

Expanded Call Center for Information and Appointments: In addition to its regular business hours, 6 a.m. until midnight, Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, the National Passport Information Center (1-877-487-2778) is open Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for customer inquiries and information. The Center has more than doubled its staff in order to meet public demand and continues to recruit and train new customer service representatives.

Increased Phone Staff: On top of their regular duties, State Department employees are volunteering on special telephone task forces to answer questions and help Americans get their passports. The Department has installed high-capacity telephone lines to increase the volume of telephone calls it can receive, with plans to further expand capacity as needed.

Increased Desk Staff: Qualified State Department employees are working on daytime, evening and weekend task forces at the Washington Passport Agency and the National Passport Center in New Hampshire. These staffers, who supplement the Department's expanding corps of passport specialists, have approved more than 55,000 applications since mid-March.

Important Points for Travelers

Applicants should be sure to check their applications against the checklist at <http://travel.state.gov/passport>; 13 percent of applications are delayed by simple errors such as not signing the application, forgetting to include a check for the applications fee, writing a check for the wrong amount, or submitting a photograph that does not meet Department specifications. Applications that use the secure online form (first time applicants: <https://pptform2.state.gov/DS11/MainDS11.aspx>; renewal applicants: <https://pptform2.state.gov/DS82/Eligibility.aspx>) will be processed more quickly.

Travelers can check the status of their passport applications online at http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/status/status_2567.html. Information on routine applications is normally available online approximately four weeks after the application is submitted. Information on expedited applications is normally available online approximately one week after the application is submitted.

Those who have applied and are leaving within two weeks can visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/npic/npic_896.html to send an email inquiry to check the status or call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778. Other travelers may leave the phone lines open for those with immediate travel needs.

Travelers who have not applied for passports to date should allow at least 10-12 weeks for standard passport processing and 2-3 weeks for expedited processing. Information on how to apply for a passport, including how to expedite processing, is available at <http://travel.state.gov>. Applicants requesting expedited service must write "EXPEDITE" on the outside of the envelope containing their application.

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