



Media Note  
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## Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Deadline Approaches

The Department of State recommends that travelers apply now for travel documents that will be required at all land or sea border entry points as of June 1, 2009. On that date, under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) U.S. citizens will be required to present a government-approved document that denotes both citizenship and identity when entering the United States.

The U.S. Passport Book and the U.S. Passport Card are the premiere documents that denote both citizenship and identity. A list of other government-approved documents is available at <http://www.getyouhome.gov/>.

The U.S. Passport Card is a wallet-sized document designed specifically for new systems being installed at land border crossings to facilitate inspections. A Passport Card costs \$45 for an adult and \$35 for a child under age 16. When applied for in conjunction with a passport book or by a previous passport holder who is eligible for renewal, the Passport Card costs \$20.

The Passport Card is valid only for entry to the United States at land border crossings and sea ports of entry when traveling from Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean region, and Bermuda. It is not valid for international air travel. The U.S. Passport Card is designed for the specific needs of the northern and southern border resident communities. It is not a globally interoperable travel document like the traditional U.S. Passport book.

The Passport Card incorporates vicinity-read radio frequency identification (RFID) technology. With this technology, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers are able to access photographs and other biographical information stored in secure government databases. For privacy protection, no personal information is stored on the electronic chip itself. The Department of State uses laser engraving and state-of-the-art security features to prevent counterfeiting and forgery. Additionally, the passport card is issued with a protective sleeve that prevents it from being read when not in use, reducing the possibility of its being tracked.

The Passport Card has been in production since July 2008. As of November 2008, more than 650,000 have been issued. Processing times for passport books and passport cards are approximately three weeks. First-time applicants or those under the age of 16 can apply at any of the more than 9,400 passport application acceptance facilities throughout the United States. Current passport holders, who are eligible to renew, can apply for a passport card by mail.

Information on how and where to apply for a U.S. Passport Card is available at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

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