



Upgraded Biometric Technology Facilitates Visitors' Entry to the United States

 SHARE

Release Date: January 15, 2009

For Immediate Release
Contact: US-VISIT Public Affairs
202-298-5200

[Fact Sheet: Expansion of US-VISIT Procedures to Additional Travelers](#)

[US-VISIT Traveler Information](#)

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced today that upgraded biometric technology is in place at major U.S. ports of entry, and most international visitors should expect to use the new technology when they enter the United States. DHS's US-VISIT program began upgrading its biometric technology from a two- to a 10-fingerprint collection standard in 2007 to make the entry process faster and more accurate, enabling DHS officials to focus their attention on people who may pose a risk to the United States.

"Since 2004, biometrics have facilitated legitimate travel for millions of visitors entering the United States," said US-VISIT Director Robert Mocny. "The 10 fingerprint upgrade makes this proven system even more efficient and enhances the security of our nation."

For nearly five years, U.S. Department of State (State) consular officers and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers have collected biometric information—digital fingerprints and a photograph—from all non-U.S. citizens between the ages of 14 and 79, with some exceptions, when they apply for visas or arrive at major U.S. ports of entry. State consular officers began collecting 10 fingerprints from visa applicants in 2007.

Collecting 10 fingerprints increases fingerprint matching accuracy and reduces the possibility that the system will misidentify an international visitor. It also strengthens DHS's capability to check visitors' fingerprints against the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) criminal data and enables DHS to check visitors' fingerprints against latent fingerprints collected by Department of Defense (DOD) and the FBI from known and unknown terrorists around the world.

DHS's US-VISIT program, in cooperation with CBP, is leading the department's upgrade to 10 fingerprint collection. This upgrade is the result of an interagency partnership among DHS, FBI, DOD and State.

US-VISIT provides biometric identification services to agencies throughout federal, state and local government. The program's most visible service is the collection of biometrics from international visitors when they apply for visas and enter the United States. Since US-VISIT began in 2004, DHS's use of biometrics has helped prevent the use of fraudulent documents, protect visitors from identity theft, and stop thousands of criminals and immigration violators from entering the United States.

###

This page was last reviewed/modified on January 15, 2009.



Fact Sheet: Expansion of US-VISIT Procedures to Additional Travelers

On December 19, 2008, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security published a Final Rule in the Federal Register that expands the categories of non-U.S. citizens required to provide biometrics—digital fingerprints and a photograph—upon entry or re-entry to the United States through the United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) Program.

Currently, certain non-U.S. citizens arriving at U.S. air, land and sea ports of entry with nonimmigrant visas or those traveling without a visa as part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) are subject to US-VISIT procedures. Under this final rule, all non-U.S. citizens, *except Canadians applying for admission to the United States as B-1/B-2 visitors for business or pleasure and those specifically exempted*, will experience US-VISIT procedures when entering the country.

Effective January 18, 2009, the following additional non-U.S. citizens will be required to provide biometrics when entering or re-entering the United States:

- Lawful permanent residents of the United States (LPRs);
- Persons entering the United States who seek admission on immigrant visas;
- Persons entering the United States who seek admission as refugees and asylees;
- Canadian citizens who are currently required to obtain a Form I-94 (Arrival-Departure Record) upon entry or who require a waiver of inadmissibility to enter the United States (this excludes most Canadian citizens entering the United States for purposes of shopping, visiting friends and family, vacation or short business trips);
- Persons paroled into the United States; and
- Persons applying for admission under the Guam VWP.

Including these additional non-U.S. citizens in US-VISIT processing is not expected to impact processing or wait times at U.S. ports of entry. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers will retain the discretion to refer travelers for secondary inspection.

The following is additional information regarding US-VISIT procedures and processing, as of January 18, 2009:

- Canadians applying for admission to the United States under a B-1 or B-2 nonimmigrant classification for business or pleasure, which represents most Canadian travelers to the United States, are not required to enroll in US-VISIT at this time.
- Canadian citizens who must now enroll in US-VISIT are those issued a Form I-94 (Arrival Departure Record), including:
 - Canadians applying for admission in the following nonimmigrant classifications: C, D, F, H, I, J, L, M, O, P, Q 1, Q 3, R, S, T, TN; and
 - Canadians who are granted a waiver of inadmissibility to enter the United States.
 - Canadians requiring issuance of Form I-94 are already referred to secondary inspection. Therefore, no additional wait time will be added.
- H-1B visa holders will follow existing protocols and will be screened through US-VISIT when applying for a new multiple entry Form I-94 or when referred to secondary inspection for other reasons.
- At seaports, LPRs returning from a closed loop cruise (cruises that begin and end at the same port in the United States) will be exempt from US-VISIT processing. LPRs returning to the United States from an “open” cruise will be subject to US-VISIT processing.
- Non-U.S. citizens entering or re-entering the United States at a land border port of entry will be processed somewhat differently, as follows, at the inspecting officer’s discretion:
 - LPRs will provide biometrics only if they are referred to secondary inspection.

- All other non-U.S. citizens included in this final rule—unless specifically exempt—will experience US-VISIT procedures during secondary inspection, just as most non-U.S. citizens already subject to US-VISIT procedures currently do (e.g., those who require a Form I-94).
- Non-U.S. citizens who seek admission with Border Crossing Cards and who do not have a Form I-94 will still go through US-VISIT procedures, at the discretion of CBP officers.

This page was last reviewed/modified on January 14, 2009.