e-PASSPORT TO THE UNITED STATES

Facilitating and Securing International Travel

WHAT IS AN e-PASSPORT?

An e-Passport contains an electronic chip. The chip holds the same information that is printed on the passport's data page: the holder's name, date of birth, and other biographic information. An e-Passport also contains a biometric identifier. The United States requires that the chip contain a digital photograph of the holder. All e-Passports issued by Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries[1] and the United States have security features to prevent the unauthorized reading or "skimming" of data stored on the e-Passport chip.

An e-Passport has this international symbol on the cover.

U.S. e-PASSPORT REQUIREMENTS

The United States requires that travelers entering the United States under the Visa Waiver Program have an e-Passport if their passport was issued *on or after* **October 26, 2006**. These e-Passports must comply with international technical standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization. U.S. ports of entry will have the capability to compare and authenticate data from e-Passports.

A VWP traveler who has a valid, machine-readable passport *with* a digital photograph does not need a new passport until the existing one expires. A VWP traveler with a valid, machine-readable passport *without* a digital photograph does not need a new passport until the existing one expires *if* the machine-readable passport was issued *before* **October 25, 2005**.

[1] The 27 countries participating in the VWP include: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Homeland Security

ENTERING THE U.S. WITH AN e-PASSPORT

The inspection process for an e-Passport holder is the same as that for a non-e-Passport holder. When arriving at U.S. ports of entry, e-Passport holders will be directed by signage or personnel on the appropriate U.S. Customs and Border Protection booth to use.

BENEFITS OF AN e-PASSPORT

E-Passports help to securely identify the traveler, provide protection against identity theft, protect privacy and make it difficult to alter a document for use in gaining admission to the United States. The biographic and biometric data contained in the electronic chip can be compared to both the traveler and the travel document being presented. There are multiple layers of security in the e-Passport process that prevent duplication.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The United States and its VWP partners have worked together through extensive testing to identify a technology solution to support the production of e-Passports and e-Passport readers. Successful testing in the United States and overseas has been an important step forward in a larger, comprehensive effort to enhance security and facilitate legitimate travel and trade through international cooperation.

****

Travelers with privacy concerns or questions about the safekeeping of their personal information should contact the US-VISIT privacy officer at usvisitprivacy@dhs.gov.

Information card created by The U.S. Department of Homeland Security. www.dhs.gov

SEPTEMBER 2006