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New Year's Resolution for U.S. and Canadian Travelers: Get Appropriate Documents Now

(Monday, January 05, 2009)

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Washington – The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Customs and Border Protection reminds U.S. and Canadian citizens that travelers will see a change in travel document requirements at the land border in 2009, and recommends travelers adopt a New Year's resolution to prepare now and obtain the appropriate documents. The new requirements are designed to make entering the U.S. more efficient and secure.

On June 1, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will go into effect at land and sea ports of entry, requiring travelers – including U.S. and Canadian citizens – to present an approved travel document to enter the United States. The approved documents include a passport, a passport card, a NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST trusted traveler program card or a state- or province-issued enhanced driver's license. Travelers under age 16 need to present only a birth certificate or alternative proof of citizenship. Visit [GetYouHome.gov](http://www.GetYouHome.gov) for specific information on acceptable documents and how to apply for them. (www.GetYouHome.gov)

"We have implemented an aggressive national and local public education and outreach campaign, and we will continue to proactively communicate the new requirements and document options to the traveling public this year," said CBP Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations Thomas S. Winkowski. "New travel document requirements begin June 1, 2009. We urge travelers not to wait until the last minute and to apply for their travel documents today."

For travelers who have yet to obtain WHTI-compliant documents, a two-document option, such as a driver's license and birth certificate, will be acceptable until June 1. Travelers without appropriate travel documents may face delays as CBP officers attempt to verify identity and citizenship.

WHTI-compliant documents include:

- U.S. or Canadian passports;
- Trusted Traveler Card (NEXUS, SENTRI, or FAST);
- U.S. Passport Card;
- State- or province-issued Enhanced Driver's Licenses (when and where available);
- Form I-872 American Indian Card, or (when available) enhanced tribal cards;
- Military identification cards presented by members of the U.S. armed forces traveling on official orders; and
- U.S. Merchant Mariner Document (for U.S. citizens, when conducting official maritime business).

Both today and after June 1, lawful permanent residents of the United States should present acceptable evidence of their lawful residence status when entering the country, such as a Permanent Resident Card (I-551). A passport is not required.

NEXUS is a joint CBP-Canada Border Services Agency program that both governments implemented to enhance border security while simplifying the entry process for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. It was established in 2002 and more than 260,000 members participate in the

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program.

SENTRI is a land-border crossing program that provides expedited CBP processing for pre-approved, low-risk travelers along the U.S./Mexico border, and has grown to include 16 lanes at the nine largest ports of entry. More than 185,000 travelers from both sides of the border currently are registered in the SENTRI program.

The Free and Secure Trade program is available to commercial drivers crossing both the northern and southern borders. Currently, the program has more than 94,000 members.

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative is the joint DHS-Department of State plan that implements a 9/11 Commission recommendation and Congressional mandate to establish document requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada and Bermuda. WHTI document requirements for air travel went into effect in 2007. For more information, visit GetYouHome.gov. (www.GetYouHome.gov)

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

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