



December 19, 2024

PA-2024-34

Policy Alert

SUBJECT: Emergencies or Unforeseen Circumstances

Purpose

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is issuing policy guidance in the [USCIS Policy Manual](#) to provide comprehensive guidance on certain flexibilities USCIS may exercise during and after emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.

Background

Whether occurring in the United States or abroad, emergencies, such as natural disasters (for example, hurricanes, wildfires, or severe weather), national emergencies (for example, public health emergencies), or other unforeseen circumstances (for example, terrorist attacks, mass shootings, system outages, or cyber attacks) may present unanticipated challenges to benefit requestors. USCIS may, in its discretion, offer certain flexibilities to assist benefit requestors during and after emergencies, in accordance with immigration statutes, regulations, and policies.¹

USCIS may exercise discretion when determining whether to offer certain flexibilities to requestors on a case-by-case basis, announce any actions taken, and issue agency-wide guidance to ensure consistent application of these flexibilities.

This guidance, contained in Volume 1 of the Policy Manual, is effective immediately, and applies to requests that are pending or filed on or after December 19, 2024. The guidance contained in the Policy Manual is controlling and supersedes any related prior guidance on the topic.

Policy Highlights

- Draws upon previously issued event-specific guidance on certain flexibilities available during an emergency or unforeseen circumstance relating to extensions of stay and changes of status, employment authorization, document replacement, failure to respond to a request for evidence, fee waivers, expedited processing, and satisfactory departure.
- Provides guidance on specific flexibilities available in times of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances and clarifies where USCIS may exercise discretion to grant flexibilities.

¹ See [INA 103\(a\)](#).

Summary of Changes

Affected Section: Volume 1, General Policies and Procedures

- Adds new Part H (Emergencies or Unforeseen Circumstances).

USCIS may also make other minor technical, stylistic, and conforming changes consistent with this update.

Citation

Volume 1: General Policies and Procedures, Part H, Emergencies or Unforeseen Circumstances [[1 USCIS-PM H](#)] (Chapters 1-3).