



Fact Sheet: US-VISIT

US-VISIT is a top priority for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security because it enhances security for our citizens and visitors while facilitating legitimate travel and trade across our borders. US-VISIT helps to secure our borders, facilitate the entry and exit process and enhance the integrity of our immigration system while respecting the privacy of our visitors.

US-VISIT is part of a continuum of security measures that begins outside U.S. borders and continues through a visitor's arrival in and departure from the United States. It incorporates eligibility determinations made by both the Departments of Homeland Security and State.

US-VISIT currently applies to all visitors (with limited exemptions) entering the United States, regardless of country of origin or whether they are traveling on a visa. Most visitors experience US VISIT's biometric procedures – digital, inkless fingerscans and digital photograph – upon entry to the United States.

In those cases where a visitor requires a visa, the Department of State collects the visitor's biometric and biographic information, which is then checked against watch lists, thereby improving the Department of State's ability to make a visa determination. When the visitor arrives in the United States, US VISIT procedures allow the Department of Homeland Security to determine whether the person applying for entry is the same person who was issued the visa by the Department of State, and additional watch list checks improve the Department of Homeland Security's ability to make admissibility decisions.

US-VISIT entry procedures are currently in place at 115 airports, 15 seaports and in the secondary inspection areas of the 50 busiest land ports of entry. As of December 29, 2004, US VISIT entry procedures were implemented at secondary screening at the 50 busiest land ports of entry. Entry procedures will be deployed to the remaining land ports of entry by December 31, 2005.

As US VISIT moves toward fulfilling its vision for an automated entry-exit system at the land border ports of entry into the United States, US VISIT is continuing to improve the border management system by planning tests of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology at the U.S. land borders.

The Goals of US-VISIT are to:

- Enhance the security of our citizens and visitors
- Facilitate legitimate travel and trade
- Ensure the integrity of our immigration system
- Protect the privacy of our visitors

How US-VISIT Works

Pre-Entry:

- Visitors applying for a visa have their information reviewed before they enter the United States. Both the Departments of Homeland Security and State play a role in determining the eligibility of a visitor to receive a visa.
- As of October 26, 2004, visitors who do not require a visa to enter the United States must present a machine-readable passport to be admitted through US VISIT and enter the country.

Entry:

- Many of the entry procedures in place today at airports and seaports remain unchanged and are familiar to international visitors. When a visitor arrives through an airport or seaport, he or she is enrolled in US-VISIT as part of the primary inspection process. At the nation's 50 busiest land ports of entry, those visitors carrying a foreign passport and/or who are required to complete a Form I-94 are enrolled in US VISIT at the secondary inspection area. (This does not apply to most Canadian citizens or, initially, to those Mexicans who use their Border Crossing Cards or "laser visa.")
- The new inkless digital fingerscanner is easy to use. Visitors first put the left index finger, then the right index finger on a glass plate that electronically captures their fingerscans.
- Visitors will also look into a camera and their digital picture will be taken.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers will review travel documents and ask questions about the visitor's stay in the United States.
- The biometric enhancements to the entry procedures take just seconds.
- Biometric identifiers also protect our visitors by making it virtually impossible for anyone else to claim their identity should their biometrically-enhanced travel documents (such as a visa) be stolen or duplicated.

Status Management:

- Should a visitor seek to adjust status or extend his/her stay, US-VISIT would be updated with any modifications to the individual's status.

Exit:

- US-VISIT is exploring departure confirmation alternatives at airports and seaports. The tests

and evaluation will continue in 2005. Ultimately, all visitors will be required to check out before leaving the United States.

- US-VISIT exit procedures are operating in nine locations: Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Baltimore/Washington International Airport, Denver International Airport, Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport, Luis Muñoz International Airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico, San Francisco International Airport, Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport and Miami International Cruise Line Terminal. Visitors leaving from these locations must check out. The exit pilot program will be piloted at additional airports and seaports in the coming months.
- The exit procedures being piloted require foreign visitors to check out at an exit station or with a US VISIT exit attendant at the departure gate at the port. After evaluating these exit procedures, DHS will select the most effective process to implement at airports and seaports system wide. Foreign visitors will go through one of the following three processes, depending on location.
 - Under one alternative, visitors departing the United States will check out of the country at exit stations located within the airport or seaport terminal. As with the process the visitors encounter upon entry at airports or seaports, their travel documents are read, their two index fingers will be scanned at the exit station, their digital picture will be taken, and they will receive a printed receipt that verifies that they have checked out. An exit attendant will be available to assist with visitors' checkout.
 - The second alternative still uses the exit station but includes an additional step – verifying – at the departure gate. Visitors will be required to present the receipt at their departure gate to confirm that they checked out at the exit station. The exit attendant will scan the receipt and then ask the visitor to place an index finger on the scanning device. Once the person's identity is matched to the receipt, the exit attendant will hand the visitor his or her receipt back and the visitor will board the airplane.
 - Another alternative under the pilot program is a biometric checkout process with a US VISIT exit attendant at visitors' departure gates.
- Currently, foreign visitors who depart from a port where the departure confirmation system is in place must comply. This exit confirmation information will help facilitate the visitor's future visits to the United States.
- US-VISIT compares arrival and departure biographical manifest data provided by the airlines and cruise lines to know when someone entered and exited the country.

Automated Land Border Entry-Exit

- US-VISIT intends to build upon the technologies and management systems previously employed for entry in order to realize an automated entry-exit process. RFID technology offers a solution for a potentially faster, biometrically enabled entry-exit operation.
- Using an automatic identifier, RFID technology can detect a visitor at a distance and provide

primary inspection with entry information as well as provide a mechanism for an accurate and timely record of exits without requiring visitors to interrupt their travels by stopping or even slowing down to check out.

- RFID technology will be tested at a simulated port this spring. By July 31, 2005, the testing will begin at the ports of Nogales East and Nogales West in Arizona, Alexandria Bay in New York and Pacific Highway and Peace Arch in Washington. The testing or “proof of concept” phase is expected to continue through the spring of 2006.
- US-VISIT will assure that our visitors’ information is always protected. The RFID technology used by US-VISIT will safeguard sensitive information because it will read only a code that links to visitors’ information securely stored in a database. It will also be tamper-proof and difficult to counterfeit or surreptitiously read.

Respecting Privacy and the Environment

- The Department of Homeland Security safeguards the biometric and biographic information provided by visitors and ensures that their privacy interests are not violated. US-VISIT records will be protected in a manner consistent with all applicable privacy laws and regulations. Personal information will be kept secure and confidential and will not be discussed with or disclosed to any person within or outside the US-VISIT Program other than as authorized by law and as required for the performance of official duties. Careful safeguards, including appropriate security controls, will ensure that the data is not used or accessed improperly.
- US-VISIT has published a Privacy Impact Assessment that ensures that personal information is used appropriately, protected from misuse and improper disclosure and destroyed when no longer needed. This will be updated as necessary.
- A US-VISIT privacy officer is available to answer questions or resolve concerns and may be contacted by sending an email to usvisitprivacy@dhs.gov or by writing to the Chief Privacy Officer, Department of Homeland Security, Washington DC 20528, USA, ATTN: US-VISIT Appeal. Information on the US-VISIT privacy program is available at www.dhs.gov/us-visit.
- US-VISIT complies with all environmental laws and regulations.

Timing and Delivery

- The Department of Homeland Security has met the December 31, 2003, and December 31, 2004, Congressional deadlines to deploy an entry-exit program that strengthens security and facilitates travel for legitimate visitors while respecting their privacy and our environment.
- The Department of Homeland Security met Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge’s deadline to implement technology that will collect and match biometric information (digital fingerprints and photos) of foreign nationals required to obtain a visa to enter the United States at airport

and seaport primary inspection locations.

- The US-VISIT Program received \$340 million for FY 04 and has been appropriated \$340 million for FY 05.

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updated February 24, 2005