

New rules requiring passports or new high-tech documents to cross the United States' northern and southern borders are taking effect Monday, June 1, 2009, as some complain the tightening of security and others applaud it as long overdue.

The rules are being implemented nearly eight years after the Sept. 11 attacks and long after the 9/11 Commission recommended the changes. They were delayed by complaints from state officials who worried the restrictions would hinder the flow of people and commerce and affect border towns dependent on international crossings.

In 2001 a driver's license and an oral declaration of citizenship were enough to cross the Canadian and Mexican borders; Monday's changes are the last step in a gradual ratcheting up of the rules. Now thousands of Americans are preparing by applying for passports or obtaining special driver's licenses that can also be used to cross the border.

The new rule, which also affects sea crossings, is the final implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, a security measure crafted from recommendations from the 9/11 Commission.

Citizens traveling by land or sea will have to have a passport, passport car or other travel document that is approved by the Department of Homeland Security to get back into the country.

Travelers used to be able to use identification such as a driver's license or birth certificate. These will now not be accepted if you are coming into the country by car or boat.

The following is an official press release from AAA about the new U.S. passport requirements.

New U.S. Passport Requirements Valid June 1.
Beginning June 1, U.S. citizens traveling by land or sea will be required to have a passport,

passport card or other travel document approved by the Department of Homeland Security for entry back into the United States. Travelers were previously able to re-enter the U.S. by land or sea with a government-issued I.D. and proof of citizenship, such as a driver's license and birth certificate.

“AAA encourages all travelers planning trips outside of the U.S. to talk to a travel agent or visit www.travel.state.gov for up-to-date information on documentation requirements and information on how to apply for passports or passport cards,” said Elaine Zeinner, AAA spokesperson. “Travelers can also visit local AAA offices for passport photos.”

The following documentation will be required for international travel as of June 1:

U.S. Passport

- Required for all international air travel and valid for land and sea travel outside the United States;
- Valid for 10 years for adults and five years for children under 16 years of age;
- Passports must be valid for at least six months after return date;
- Cost is \$100 for travelers 16 and older; \$85 for children under 16.

Passport Card

- Valid for travelers re-entering United States by land or sea ports from Canada, [Mexico](#), [the Caribbean](#) and Bermuda;
- Passport cards are not valid for international air travel;
- Cards are valid for 10 years for adults and five years for children under 16 years old;
- Cost is \$45 for first-time adult carriers; \$35 for all minors; or \$20 for adults requesting passport card as renewal for valid passport;

- AAA strongly recommends cruise travelers apply for U.S. passports in case they need to re-enter the U.S. unexpectedly by air from a foreign port during a cruise.

Additional Documentation and Exceptions

- Enhanced Drivers' License: Washington and New York currently issue enhanced drivers license, which denote identity and citizenship, accepted for land travel into Canada and [Mexico](#) . Vermont, Arizona and Michigan will soon offer enhanced drivers license to residents who frequently travel by land into Canada or [Mexico](#)

- Trusted Travelers Program: U.S. residents who frequently travel into Canada or [Mexico](#) can apply for the Trusted Travelers Program for expedited travel at land or sea ports of entry into the United States.

Children: U.S. citizen children under age 16 arriving by land or sea from contiguous territory may present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card.

Cruise Passengers: Travelers departing from and returning to the same U.S. port on a cruise do not need a passport. A valid birth certificate is still accepted. However, AAA recommends travelers carry a passport in case they need to fly home unexpectedly.

New passport requirements are being enacted under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, part of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) that requires all travelers to present approved documentation that denotes identity and citizenship when entering the U.S.

Passport fees

Fees for passports are \$100 (\$75 application fee, \$25 execution fee) for those 16 and over; \$85 for those under 16.

Fees for passport cards are \$45 (\$20 application fee, \$25 execution fee) for those 16 and over; \$35 for those under 16.

Fees for passports applied for by mail are \$75. Minors may not apply by mail.

Fees for passport cards applied for by mail are \$20. Minors may not apply by mail.

Credit-debit cards are accepted for both fees at a passport agency.

Only the \$25 application fee can be paid using a credit card at most agencies; the application fee must be paid with a check, money order or bank draft.

U.S. passports or passport cards are valid 10 years for an adult; five years for minors under 16.

Passports may be renewed by mail, under certain criteria, by submitting Form DS-82; other renewals must be done in person.

For more information, visit www.Travel.State.Gov

Things to know

Travelers can apply in person at an accepted facility or by mail by submitting the appropriate form (DS-82). First-time passport applicants must apply in person.

Travelers must present one of the following forms of U.S. citizenship: Previously issued, undamaged U.S. passport; certified birth certificate issued by the city, county or state; consular report of birth abroad or certification of birth; naturalization certificate; certificate of citizenship.

Travelers must also supply two identical photos, 2 by 2 inches, of a full face, front view, taken within the past six months, showing the current appearance of the applicant.

Passport cards

Passport cards are a new, cheaper alternative to regular passports. According to the U.S. State Department's Web site, more than 1 million have been issued since production began July 14.

The cards can be used to enter the United States from Canada, [Mexico](#) , [the Caribbean](#) and Bermuda at land crossings or sea ports-of-entry. They cannot be used for international air travel.

Passport cards contain chips that enable custom inspectors, when necessary, to access photos and other biographical information stored in government databases.