



FACT SHEET

You've booked your convention in Montréal—but you're not sure what you and your delegates need to cross the U.S.-Canada border? Since the U.S. Congress enacted the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) in 2004, there have been changes, but for the most part it's business as usual. Browse through this fact sheet to find out what you need to know to make coming to Canada as hassle-free as possible.

Why the WHTI?

- For a number of reasons. For one, the U.S. and Canada decided to strengthen border security post September 11, 2001. For another, both governments knew changes were in order to facilitate the daily flow of traffic and improve the speed of business transactions between countries. Bottom line: the system was archaic and needed to be revamped to improve both security and efficiency.

Who does the WHTI affect?

- Citizens of the United States, Canada, Mexico and Bermuda. (No changes are currently planned for travel from Europe).

What do I need to cross the Canada-U.S. border now?


- In 2006, the old rules still apply. A passport, if you have one, is still your best piece of identification, although other documents, such as government-issued photo ID (e.g. state-issued driver's license, state-issued identification card, Permanent Resident Card), are accepted. To find out exactly what you should bring along, consult the United State's Department Travel Web site: www.travel.state.gov
For Canada, consult: www.cic.gc.ca

How will the WHTI affect travel in the future?

- **Starting December 31, 2006**, everyone leaving the U.S. **by air or by sea** to and from anywhere in the Western Hemisphere will have to present a **valid passport or other acceptable ID document**.
- **Starting December 31, 2007**, everyone crossing the U.S. border **by land** will be required to present a **valid passport, or other acceptable ID document**.

Can you tell me more about U.S. passports?

- 34% of the general population 18 years old and over in the U.S. hold a valid passport. This 34% is made up of people who do the most traveling. People like you. People like your colleagues and clients.
- Getting a passport is fairly simple for U.S. citizens. Here are some handy helpers if you need them: The State Department's travel Web site is: www.travel.state.gov. The U.S. National Passport Information Center phone number is: 1-877-4USA-PPT
- It takes about 6 weeks to process your application for a passport. (Ways to speed things up if necessary are explained on the State Department website.) Peak demand occurs between January and July, so it can be faster if you apply between August and December.

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- As of October 2006, all new and renewed U.S. passports will contain radio frequency identification chips that will encode a digital photo and all other information currently printed on passports.

What about the new identity cards?

Close to 300,000 people a day cross the U.S.-Canada border, especially for work purposes. Obviously, finding secure and streamlined ways to get them to where they need to go is a preoccupation of both governments. Here are some of the projects currently in use between the United States, Canada and Mexico:

- **NEXUS**, a joint program currently employed by the Canadian and American governments, which fast tracks pre-approved low-risk travellers between both countries using biographic and biometric information. To date, over 80,000 U.S. and Canadian citizens have already been vetted and enrolled in the program.
- **Border Crossing card** or “laser visa”, used instead of a passport for Mexican citizens travelling to the U.S.
- **Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI)**, the world’s first automated dedicated commuter lane, using advanced Automatic Vehicle Identification (AVI) technology to accelerate low-risk, pre-enrolled crossers through ports of entry.
- **The Free and Secure Trade (FAST)**, a joint Canada-U.S. initiative and harmonized commercial process offered to pre-approved importers, carriers and registered drivers.

What will the identity card of the future be?

- Biometrics is probably going to be a big part of the equation, though the logistics of introducing a new card need to be ironed out too. On the plus side, a biometric ID card would be like your DNA—absolute proof that you are who you say you are. It would thwart forgers and counterfeiters. It would be universally recognizable and widely usable for travel as well as other things. And it should be relatively inexpensive to issue.

How can I help improve border security?

- The Departments of Homeland Security and State have requested input and/or comment from the public on new or alternative documents that can meet the new statutory requirements. If you want to be part of this process, you can access the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov and follow the prompts to submit your comments.