



**Homeland
Security**

Press Release

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**HOMELAND SECURITY AND STATE DEPARTMENTS ANNOUNCE
WHTI LAND AND SEA FINAL RULE
*Implementation to Occur on June 1, 2009***

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) announced today the final rule for the land and sea portion of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), a core 9/11 Commission recommendation. The WHTI final rule requires travelers to present a passport or other approved secure document denoting citizenship and identity for all land and sea travel into the United States. WHTI establishes document requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada and Bermuda. These document requirements will be effective June 1, 2009.

“We are on course to implement and enforce the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative which is an important step forward in securing the homeland,” said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. “Limiting and standardizing the types of documents presented will result in a more secure and efficient border. We will continue to encourage cross-border travel and trade while at the same time decreasing identity theft and fraud.”

In addition to the release of the WHTI final rule, DHS is officially designating the Washington State Enhanced Driver’s License (EDL) a WHTI-compliant document. As of March 24, Washington State had already scheduled more than 18,600 appointments for EDL interviews and issued more than 6,400 EDLs.

DHS is publishing the WHTI land and sea final rule more than a year in advance of its implementation to give the public ample notice and time to obtain the WHTI-compliant documents they will need to enter or re-enter the United States on or after June 1, 2009.

Many cross-border travelers already have WHTI-compliant documents such as a Passport or a Trusted Traveler Card (NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST), or a Washington State EDL. The Department of State is already accepting applications for the new Passport Cards and

additional states and Canadian provinces will be issuing EDLs in the next several months—all of which are options specifically designed for land and sea border use.

Beginning June 1, 2009, DHS will institute special provisions that allow school or other organized groups of children ages 18 and under who are U.S. or Canadian citizens to enter the U.S. with proof of citizenship alone.

Over the next 14 months, the Departments will be conducting public information campaigns to inform U.S. and Canadian citizens about the new document requirements. These campaigns will include special outreach to residents of border communities who may be most impacted by the new document requirements. DHS and DOS are working with the Canadian government to ensure widespread and consistent communications on both sides of our land borders.

This announcement comes two months after January 31, 2008, when DHS ended acceptance of oral declarations alone of identity and citizenship at the land borders. Since that time U.S. and Canadian citizens ages 19 and older have been asked to present proof of identity and citizenship. Children ages 18 and under are currently asked only to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate.

The changes that took place in January marked the beginning of a transition period intended to prepare the public for WHTI implementation on June 1, 2009. This common sense approach is designed to lessen the impact on individuals and allow time for travelers to become accustomed to the change and obtain the appropriate documents.

Upon implementation of WHTI, travelers will be required to present a single WHTI-compliant document denoting *both* citizenship and identity when seeking entry into the United States through a land or sea border. Standardized, secure and reliable documentation will enable Customs and Border Protection officers to quickly and accurately identify travelers at land and sea ports of entry. The WHTI secure document requirement is already in place for all air travelers.

Both the EDL and the Passport Card will contain security features to prevent counterfeiting and will include vicinity Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) to help speed the entry process at the land borders.

The WHTI land and sea final rule and a notice on the Washington State EDL have been sent to the Federal Register for publication. Specific information on documentation requirements may be found at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready_set_go/. For general information on WHTI or other travel-related programs, please visit www.dhs.gov or www.travel.state.gov.

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