



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

MEDIA RELEASE

D01

7 January 2009

NEW PROCEDURES FOR AUSTRALIANS TRAVELLING TO THE US

From this Monday (12 January) Australians travelling to the United States of America will be required to follow new border entry procedures.

All Australian passport-holders eligible to travel to the US under that country's Visa Waiver Program must, before they travel, obtain approval through the US' Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA). This also applies to passport-holders from other countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program.

ESTA is an online system administered by the United States Government which determines the preliminary eligibility of visitors to travel under the Visa Waiver Program prior to boarding a carrier to the United States. ESTA has been operating on a voluntary basis since 1 August 2008 and will become compulsory on 12 January 2009.

The ESTA website is at: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. Prospective travellers will be required to provide basic biographic, travel and eligibility information online in order to receive authorisation prior to their departure. There is no charge to complete the application.

Most travellers can expect to receive authorisation within a few minutes. However, travellers are advised to complete an ESTA as soon as they begin to plan their travel, and at least three days in advance, to avoid any last-minute delays. Travellers who do not have a valid ESTA on or after 12 January 2009 may be denied boarding, experience delayed processing or be denied admission at a United States port of entry. Once granted, electronic pre-clearance will be valid for up to two years and for multiple-entry visits to the United States.

It is recommended that travellers keep a print-out or record of their ESTA application number for reference, if required, at airports or seaports.

Australian passport-holders who hold a valid visa for travel to the United States are not required to obtain an ESTA.

For more information, read the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's travel bulletin "United States-New Entry Requirements" at www.smartraveller.gov.au which contains more detailed information about ESTA and links to the relevant US Government websites.

The United States offers a visa information service on 1800 687 844 (charges apply).

What is the Visa Waiver Program?

The Visa Waiver Program allows eligible visitors from Australia and other participating countries to travel to the United States for business or pleasure for 90 days or less without first obtaining a visa.