

Notice on Current Visa Processing Situation

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the State Department has been engaged with other U.S. government agencies in an extensive and ongoing review of visa issuing practices as they relate to the security of our borders and our nation.

Through the use of supplemental application forms and other measures, visa applications are now subject to a greater degree of scrutiny than in the past. This scrutiny means that visa applications in some instances take longer to process to conclusion than has been customary. We recognize that individual applicants may experience inconvenience and hardship if their application takes longer to process than they expected. We are doing everything possible to meet the legitimate needs of prospective travelers consistent with the priority we must attach to our security and legal responsibilities.

While our consular officers strive to offer visa applicants as expeditious service as possible, their primary responsibility is to carry out U.S. law and to ensure that applicants to whom they issue visas will not pose a threat to the safety and security of the United States and its inhabitants. This is a serious responsibility that must take precedence over other considerations pertaining to a visa application.

We realize that these necessary security measures may affect the travel plans of visa applicants, especially individuals intending to enroll in or continue college and university studies in the United States. We will make every attempt to meet the legitimate needs of prospective travelers to the United States, consistent with the priority of our security and legal responsibilities. We recommend that individuals build in ample time before their planned travel date when seeking to obtain a visa.

Special security screening procedures affect a limited number of prospective travelers. Our goal is to have assured security within a system that is responsive to everyone wishing to visit the United States. However, delays in processing of

visas will continue to occur as the Department of State, working with other agencies, brings new information systems on line. Responding to the attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress ordered that security inadequacies be identified and addressed. By legislative instruction, some of this work was specifically to be accomplished by the first anniversary of the attacks. That work is in course now in accordance with those instructions.

The time needed for adjudication of individual cases will continue to be difficult to predict, as necessary new procedures are refined. Visa applicants affected by these procedures are informed of the need for additional screening at the time of application and should expect substantial delays of six to eight weeks or more before a visa can be issued.

We trust that affected applicants will understand that this waiting period is necessary as we strive to make every effort to ensure the safety and security of the United States for all who are here, including foreign visitors.

[Return to Visa Services Page](#)