

PART 11: PASSPORTS AND VISAS

NOTE: Diplomatic, Official, and Personal passports are issued by the Department of State. FAS, as the lead Foreign Affairs Agency within USDA, has been designated as the USDA agency responsible for requesting Diplomatic and Official passports for USDA employees.

1 Requirements for a Government Passport

(http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html)

A. Who Needs a Government Passport?

All employees who are U.S. citizens traveling to a foreign country to conduct official business shall travel using either an Official or Diplomatic passport. *Employees are not permitted to use their Personal passport to travel overseas to conduct official government business.* There are no exceptions other than those stated in paragraph C below.

B. Types of Passports

- *Official passports* are issued by the Department of State to employees of the U.S. Government proceeding, traveling, or on assignment abroad and have a maximum validity of five years.
- *Diplomatic passports* are issued to Foreign Service officers, persons in the diplomatic service, or persons who have diplomatic status either because of the nature of their foreign mission or by reason of the office they hold. Diplomatic passports also have a maximum validity of 5 years.

C. Exception to Required Use Policy

- *Travel to Taiwan* - U.S. Government employees traveling to Taiwan must use a Personal passport. If the agency pays for the Personal passport, it remains the property of the U.S. Government and the passport must be returned to ITS within 5 working days after returning from the trip.
- *Travel to Canada* - U.S. Government employees traveling to Canada are not required by the Canadian Government to use an Official passport to enter the country to conduct U.S. Government business. However, it is considered advisable to use an Official passport.

D. Prohibited Use of Passport

- U.S. Government employees traveling abroad on personal travel shall not use an Official or Diplomatic passport in any capacity.
- U.S. Government employees detailed to a private or international organization shall not use an Official or Diplomatic passport. The fact that the government employees salary is still being paid by the employing agency does not constitute a reason to use an Official or Diplomatic passport.

E. Provisional Use of Passport

- U.S. Government employees assigned overseas in an official capacity may use their Official or Diplomatic passport for personal travel during their tour.
- U.S. Government employees traveling abroad on official business (TDY) may use their Official or Diplomatic passport for Agency approved personal stops incident to the official trip.
- U.S. Government employees traveling abroad on military travel orders to countries requiring a passport. A copy of the signed military travel order must be presented to ITS.

2 Application Process to Obtain a Passport

A. Forms Required to Obtain a Passport

- **Electronic IPATTS Passport/Visa Request** - this form must be completed in conjunction with the appropriate DSP form listed below. Failure to use the proper form will result in a delay in the issuance of your passport. **NOTE:** Form AD-121 will soon be replaced with electronic IPATTS Travel Request System. The AD-121 is available on the web at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>
- **DSP-11, Application for Passport** - this form must be presented to and signed in person of an authorized passport agent (refer to paragraph D). If you have never had a passport or if your most recent passport was lost or stolen, you must use this form. Refer to Section 3C for additional information concerning lost or stolen passports. The DSP-11 can be downloaded from the web site at: http://travel.state.gov/passport_obtain.html
- **DSP-82, Application for Passport by Mail** - this form should be used for renewing a previously issued U.S. passport. Refer to Paragraph 3B, Renewal, for additional information concerning renewal of passports. The DSP-82 is available for downloading from the web site at: http://travel.state.gov/passport_renewal.html

A. Forms Required to Obtain a Passport, *continued*

There are four criteria for using Form DSP-82. Use the following checklist to see if you are eligible to apply with form DSP-82:

- I can submit my most recent passport
- I was at least 16 years old when my most recent passport was issued
- I was issued my most recent passport less than 15 years ago
- I use the same name as on my recent passport, OR, I have had my name changed by marriage or court order and can submit proper documentation to reflect my name change

If you answered NO to any of the above.....STOP! You cannot use form DSP-82!! You must apply on application form DSP-11.

If the DSP-82 is used it must be submitted to the USDA/FAS/FAA International Travel Section through your agency travel coordination, NOT to the Department of State.

B. Other Documents Required

Depending on which application form is used, there are other documents required to complete the passport application package.

- If using form **DSP-11**, submit the following:
 - A previous U.S. passport (if less than 15 years old use form DSP-82), or
 - If born in the U.S., a certified copy of your birth certificate issued by the state, city, or county of your birth. A certified copy will have a registrar's raised, embossed, impressed or multicolored seal and the date the certificate was filed
 - If you have neither a passport nor a certified birth certificate, submit a notice from the registrar of the state of your birth that no birth record exists
 - If born abroad, submit a Certificate of Naturalization, Certificate of Citizenship, Report of Birth Abroad of a U.S. Citizen, or a Certificate of Birth issued by the Department of State
 - Two passport photos
- If using form **DSP-82**, submit the following:
 - Personal or official passport less than 15 years old
 - Two passport photos

C. Passport Photos

Two identical photographs are required to be attached to the passport application. Photos must be 2x2 inches in size and taken within the past six months.

For Washington, D.C.-based employees:

- Photos are taken daily in Room 1069-S between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Schedule photo appointment by calling (202) 720-7815.

For field office employees:

- Field office employees are responsible for obtaining their own photos, which must be attached to the passport application. Photos must be clear, front view, full face, normal street attire **without** a head covering (unless a signed statement is submitted indicating that the head covering is worn daily for religious or medical reasons), **and/or without** dark glasses, unless they are normally worn for medical reasons (a statement from a doctor must be submitted supporting this).
- Photos must be printed (1) on thin paper (2) with a white or off-white background (3) in black and white or color, and (4) capable of withstanding a mounting temperature of 225 degrees Fahrenheit. Photographs that are retouched so that your appearance is changed are unacceptable, as are snapshots. MOST vending machine print magazines or full-length photos are unacceptable.

D. Where to Apply for a Passport?

WDC.-based employees should schedule an appointment with the Passport Agent in ITS at (202) 720-7815. Travelers must appear in person and present a complete passport package.

Field office employees can apply for a passport at many Federal and State courts, probate courts, and some post offices. More than 2500 courts and 900 post offices accept passport applications. Use the following web site to locate the closest facility: <http://travel.state.gov/cgi-bin/search.accept.cgi>

NOTE: If you are using form DSP-11, **DO NOT** sign the form until instructed to do so. You must also have a form AD-121 signed by the Chief, International Services Branch, attached to your passport package.

E. Requesting Birth Records

The Federal Government does not maintain copies of birth records of persons born in the U.S. or its Territories. Therefore, if the traveler must obtain their birth record, they can request a copy in writing from the State vital statistics office or the city, county or other local office where the birth occurred. The addresses of all States and Territories are listed and the fees that each State or Territory charges for a copy(s) of birth records and additional information needed to obtain birth records is available on the following web site: <http://www/cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>

F. Submission

For Washington, D.C.-based employees, the traveler must submit the required forms to obtain a new or renewal passport 15 working days prior to the date of departure. Forms submitted less than 15 working days in advance of departure will require a letter of justification for expedited handling. Travel to more than two countries or to Russia, China, or Vietnam will require additional working days.

For field offices, the traveler must submit the required forms to obtain a new or renewal passport 40 working days prior to the date of departure. Forms submitted less than 40 working days in advance of departure will require a letter of justification for expedited handling. Travel to more than two countries or to Russia, China, or Vietnam will require additional working days.

3 Other Passport Actions

A. Expiring Passports

Official and Diplomatic passports issued by Department of State (DOS) are valid for 5 years from the date of issuance. Employees who have passports on file which are expiring just before or during a proposed trip, must allow adequate time for renewal. Some embassies will not put a visa in a passport which has less than six months of validity and/or less than three months of validity beyond the end of the visit to that country.

Passports are accountable property of the U.S. Government and when they expire they must be returned to DOS for cancellation or destruction. ITS generates a report each month that lists the passports which will expire during the next ninety days. For Washington, D.C.-based employees, ITS sends an email message to the employee and respective DD notifying them of the date the designated employee's passport will expire. This message is sent only once and it then becomes the employee's responsibility to take action to renew the passport if required.

B. Renewal

DOS allows Foreign Service Officers to renew their Diplomatic Passport without evidence of an overseas assignment or pending TDY trip. DOS does not allow for the renewal of an Official Passport without certification that the employee will be traveling overseas within the next 60 days. The employee will have to complete a Request to Renew Passport letter signed by their Division Director, a Passport Application form (DSP-82), a form AD-121 and have passport pictures taken. These actions must be accomplished prior to the current Passport expiration date. The renewal request form letter is available on the web site at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>

C. Lost or Stolen Passport

Form DSP-64 is required when a traveler's passport has been lost or stolen. The information on the form should be as accurate as possible and include date and location of loss or theft. The applicant should also document what efforts were made to recover the passport. The employee should indicate whether or not the loss was reported to the police and if so, the police report number. The completed form should be submitted to ITS for processing, **NOT** to the Department of State. The DSP-64 is available for downloading from the following web site: http://travel.state.gov/report_ppt.html

D. Name Change

The following website explains the process for a name change on your passport; however, the required forms and supporting information are to be sent to the ITS instead of the Department of State.

- http://www.travel.state.gov/name_change.html

4 Accountability of Government Passports

A. Traveler's Responsibility

In compliance with 2 CFR 51.9, a passport shall at all times remain the property of the U.S. Government and shall be returned to the government upon demand. In order to maintain continuous accountability of the Official and Diplomatic passports, USDA regulation, DM 2300-1, 301-18.4(j)(1), demands that the passports be returned to ITS.

Upon returning from official travel, passports must be returned to ITS within 5 working days after completion of the trip for which it was used.

FAS employees returning from an overseas trip should return their passport either to the ITS office, Room 1069-S, in person or by a designated staff member and wait for a receipt. **DO NOT** return passports via a chain messenger envelope or any mail envelope as these are Government accountable documents.

B. ITS Responsibility

ITS has been delegated the authority by DOS to manage procurement, execution, control, and distribution of Official and Diplomatic passports for USDA employees. Passports are released to travelers with the understanding that all proper clearances are in order. As noted above, passports must be returned to ITS within 5 working days after completion of trip.

5 VISAS

A. Time and VISA Requirements

VISA requirements are different for each country and it is recommended that travelers check the following website when making travel plans to help determine how long it may take to obtain the necessary visa(s): http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/w/visa_requirements/default.htm

ITS has no control over the timing in which foreign embassies will issue visas. Most foreign embassies require that the passport be left for at least 24 hours to obtain a visa. A number of embassies only accept visa applications and allow the pickup of visas between specified hours on specified days. Countries such as China, Russia, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and Cuba require from 7 to 20 working days dependent on the purpose of the trip. In addition, most foreign embassies observe their country's holidays as well as U.S. holidays, which may increase the time requirements to obtain visas.

B. Restrictions

Only **ITS** has the signature authority to request visas. No other USDA agency, organization or individual employee is authorized to acquire visas from foreign embassies. Travelers **should not** attempt to contact embassies unless asked to do so by ITS. Employees **must not** try to pick up passports/visas directly from embassies/consulates unless directed to do so by ITS. Failure to follow this requirement may jeopardize authority for the trip to occur.