

International Travelers from Visa Waiver Program Countries

Effective January 20, 2010, inbound travelers to the United States from Visa Waiver Program countries may be denied boarding by the airlines if they haven't complied with the US Department of Homeland Security's Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) program. ESTA, introduced in January, 2009, requires all international travelers from VWP countries to register in an online database. Previously, international travelers had to fill out an I-94W form before each trip, but ESTA seeks to streamline and update the process.

Now, international travelers to the United States must go to the ESTA web site and fill out an application before entering the country by air or sea. If approved, authorization is good for two years and can be renewed. Travelers no longer have to fill out an I-94W form before each trip. US officials say ESTA will speed up the process for travelers, enable customs officials to screen passengers in advance and improve security. VWP travelers who have not received an ESTA approval may be denied boarding.

The ESTA requirement does not affect US citizens returning from overseas, people from VWP countries traveling on a valid US visa, or travelers from non-VWP nations. For additional information, including the online application, please visit: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>