

# More Americans Forced to Apply for Passports



Gone are the days when American citizens could take a hop, skip and a jump across the border armed with a mere driving licence or birth certificate. New legislation has been enacted that requires US citizens to have a passport in order to enter or leave the USA, regardless of the destination.

Few Americans currently are aware of this requirement. Many are preparing to visit neighboring Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean countries, and the new passport rules are certain to complicate their travel plans.

An estimated 10 million Americans are planning a trip abroad this summer. In a recent survey of 2,000 travellers, it was found that most did not know about the need to carry a passport. This has led to a call for federal action to publicize the matter and to forewarn citizens who are about to travel.

Results so far have been positive, as the waiting period for a passport has gone from 4/6 weeks to 10/12 weeks. The passport office has been inundated with applications. 27% of US citizens now have a passport compared to a meagre 12% one and a half years ago; the change has been drastic.

Across the northern border of the US, Canadians have been experiencing fewer problems with the new passport law and have applied for new documentation without the slightest hassle. It seems that Americans will need just that little bit more time to get used to such a dramatic bureaucratic change.

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