

## **E-Passport Testing to Begin at San Francisco International Airport**

For Immediate Release

Office of the Press Secretary

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — A live test of e-Passports, that contain contactless chips with biographic and biometric information and the readers that are capable of reading these e-Passports, begins January 15, 2006 at Terminal G at San Francisco International Airport (SFO). This test is a collaborative effort between the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore that will run through April 15, 2006.

“This test provides an important opportunity to work with our international partners to further the Department of Homeland Security’s efforts to put in place an e-Passport reader solution by the fall of this year,” said Jim Williams, director of US VISIT, a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) program.

Participants include citizens of Australia and New Zealand who have been issued the new e-Passports, Singapore Airlines crew and officials holding trial e-Passports and U.S. diplomatic and official e-Passport holders.

The test will assess the operational impact of using new equipment and software to read and verify the information embedded in the e Passports. Participants will present their e-Passports when arriving in the United States at SFO, at Changi Airport in Singapore or at Sydney Airport in Australia.

The e-Passport contains the holder’s biographic information and a biometric identifier, in this case a digital photograph, embedded in a contactless chip set in the passport. The inspection process for those participating does not change.

The e-Passports being tested are enabled with a security feature known as Basic Access Control (BAC), which helps prevent the unauthorized reading, or “skimming,” of information from e Passports.

This is the second live test conducted between the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The goal of the live test is to gather information that can support countries around the world in their development and implementation of e-Passports that comply with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. It will also provide valuable information on the capability of the reader technology.

“The results of the previous test, held at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and Sydney Airport, indicated that further testing would be beneficial to our development of a fully operational system,” Williams said. “So we will conduct further testing to allow for the evaluation of new technologies.”

Biometrics included in a contactless chip provides a further means by which the identity of visitors may be verified, thus preventing entry by imposters and the use of fraudulent documents. Biometrics provide border officials with a critical tool in making admissibility decisions, thus enhancing homeland security.

A DHS priority, US-VISIT enhances the security of our citizens and visitors, facilitates legitimate travel and trade, ensures the integrity of our immigration system and protects personal privacy. To date, more than 46 million visitors to the United States have been processed through US-VISIT without adversely impacting wait times, and more than 990 criminals or immigration violators have been intercepted as a result of the use of biometrics.

For more information on US VISIT, or to learn more about entry procedures, please visit the US VISIT Web site at [www.dhs.gov/us-visit](http://www.dhs.gov/us-visit).