

Green Cards Recalled Because of a Glitch

By Solomon Moore
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The federal government has recalled more than 60,000 green cards because a computer glitch miscalculated immigrants' residency start dates.

Last month, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services sent letters to asylum recipients informing them that their residency cards had the wrong dates and instructing them to send them back to the government.

Reissued replacement cards will arrive about three weeks after the originals are returned, immigration officials said.

'It's unfortunate that this has impacted people and has caused a little confusion, but ultimately this will cause no changes in status for anyone,' said immigration spokesman Bill Strassberger.

He said a software change caused the problem. Cardholders who attempt to reenter the United States could encounter problems if immigration officers notice that their green cards' residency 'since dates' are different from the dates in the government's electronic files.

Strassberger also said that refugees who are planning to apply for citizenship could be misled by their residency cards to wait longer than needed.

The large number of people affected by the glitch is a result of a recent asylum law that lifted an annual cap on the number of refugees who could apply for residency, Strassberger said. Now all asylum-holders are allowed to apply for residency after one year, Strassberger said, and legal residents can apply for citizenship after five years of residency.

Strassberger said he did not know how much the card recall and reissues would cost the government. He said the government reacted as soon as it learned of the problem but decided not to inform the general public about the problem.

'We felt that would cause more confusion and make more people think this would affect them, even if it didn't,' he said.