

# State Department Ramps Up Passport Production To Meet Record Demand

## Media Note

### Office of the Spokesman

Washington, DC

March 23, 2007

The Department of State remains committed to providing Americans with the passports they need to travel abroad. As passport demand rises to historic levels, the Department is taking necessary steps to meet the challenge:

- Producing More Passports than Ever: The Department has set a new record for passport production. In the week ending March 22, 379,000 passports were issued, on top of the 321,000 passports issued the previous week. The Department of State is on track to issue over 1.5 million passports in March.
- Regional Agencies Working through the Weekend: Employees at the 17 Passport Agencies nationwide continue to work overtime and through the weekend to process applications to meet Americans' spring travel plans.
- Telephone Information Available Daily and Weekends: The National Passport Information Center (1-877-487-2778) is now open for limited weekend hours to make emergency arrangements for travelers departing in seven days or less. NPIC is already staffed Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until midnight, Eastern Time.
- Volunteers on the Phones: On top of their regular duties, 350 State Department employees are serving on task forces, devoting nearly 2,500 hours to answering questions and helping Americans get their passports. The Department has installed high-capacity telephone lines to increase the volume of telephone calls it can receive.
- Volunteers at the Desks: Qualified State Department employees are also volunteering to help process passport applications. These volunteers, who have approved 5,000 applications so far, supplement the Department's corps of passport specialists, which has increased by 230 new hires since 2005.

### Important Points for Travelers

Travelers can check the status of their passport applications on <http://travel.state.gov>.

Travelers who have applied for passports and are traveling in two weeks or sooner should call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778 for information and assistance in arranging to have their passports ready in time for their trips. We ask that other travelers leave these phone lines open for those with immediate travel needs.

Travelers who have not applied for passports to date should plan ten weeks for standard passport processing and two weeks for expedited processing. Information on how to apply for a passport, including how to expedite processing, is available at <http://travel.state.gov>. Applicants requesting expedited service must write "**EXPEDITE**" on the outside of the envelope containing their application.

**2007/221**

Released on March 23, 2007