



Embassy of the United States of America  
100 Duke & Young Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana

## **Installment Eighty-Four**

### **Ask the Consul – Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and E-Passports**

Recently, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced important requirements for nationals of countries in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP): pre-registration with the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and a new additional requirement effective July 1, 2009 dealing with the use of E-Passports. ESTA is a free, automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the VWP. E-Passports are passports containing an electronic chip that holds the information from the printed portion of the passport, along with a digital photograph of the holder.

#### **Q: Who do these requirements apply to?**

These new requirements apply only to nationals of countries permitted to travel temporarily to the United States for business or pleasure without a visa, i.e. Visa Waiver Program countries. Guyanese and other citizens wishing to travel to the U.S. for business or pleasure should continue to apply for an appropriate non-immigrant visa at the United States Embassy.

#### **Q: What is ESTA?**

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) is an automated system that assists in determining eligibility to travel to the United States under the VWP, and whether such travel poses any law enforcement or security risk. Upon completion of an ESTA application, a VWP traveler will be notified of his or her eligibility to travel to the United States under the VWP. ESTA collects the same information as the paper I-94W form that VWP travelers currently fill out en route to the United States.

#### **Q: How do I use ESTA?**

Eligible passengers must register prior to travel to the U.S. through the ESTA website – <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> - which is available in 21 languages. Although applications may be accepted at any time prior to boarding the plane, VWP travelers are encouraged to apply for authorization as soon as they begin to plan their trip to the United States. As this only applies to travel without a visa, VWP nationals who hold valid U.S. visas do not need to use ESTA. **Guyana passport holders continue to require visas and are not eligible to use ESTA.**

**Q: Is ESTA mandatory?**

Yes. All VWP travelers who do not have a U.S. visa are required to obtain an authorization via ESTA before traveling to the United States.

**Q: What is an E-Passport?**

An E-Passport contains a computer chip with all of the data printed in the passport along with biometric identifiers. All E-Passports issued by VWP countries and the United States have security features to prevent the unauthorized reading or “skimming” of data stored on the E-Passport chip.

**Q: What if I need to travel before obtaining an E-Passport?**

Effective July 1, 2009, any VWP national or citizen with an emergency or temporary passport issued on or after October 26, 2006 that is not an E-passport will be required to apply for a U.S. visa at a U.S. embassy prior to travel, or apply for a waiver at a U.S. port of entry.

**Q: What if I am a national of Guyana and need to travel urgently?**

Nationals and citizens of non-VWP countries, including Guyana, may continue to present regular emergency and temporary passports that are not E-passports for admission into the United States.

**Q: Do Guyanese citizens need to use ESTA or E-Passports?**

No, Guyanese citizens wishing to travel to the U.S. for temporary business or pleasure should continue to apply for an appropriate non-immigrant visa at the U.S. Embassy. Holders of valid U.S. visas from a VWP eligible country do not need to use ESTA.

**Q: Tell me more about the Visa Waiver Program?**

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) is administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and enables eligible citizens or nationals of the following countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. Although Guyana is not currently part of the VWP, many nationals of VWP countries reside in or visit Guyana and are eligible to travel on the VWP.

**Q: Where can I find out more about ESTA and the Visa Waiver Program?**

The Department of Homeland Security administers the Visa Waiver Program and ESTA. You can find out more about both at DHS’s Customs and Border Protection website:

[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id\\_visa/esta/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/). You can also find out general information about visas and requirements for traveling to the U.S. at <http://travel.state.gov>.

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*“Ask the Consul” is a periodic column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at [AskGeorge@state.gov](mailto:AskGeorge@state.gov). We select questions and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at [http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/guyana/ask\\_con.html](http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/guyana/ask_con.html). For more information about visas please see <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov> or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/>.*

*Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul.  
Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email [visageorge@state.gov](mailto:visageorge@state.gov) or call 225-7965 between 8  
am- 12 pm and 1 pm- 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.*