



# U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## The Electronic System for Travel Authorization and Expansion of the Visa Waiver Program

FACT SHEET

**The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables eligible citizens or nationals of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa.**

### ESTA Background

Recently enacted U.S. legislation required the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to implement the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) and other measures to enhance the security of the VWP. ESTA provides a layer of security that allows DHS to determine, in advance of travel, whether an individual is eligible to travel to the United States under the VWP and whether such travel poses a law enforcement or security risk. ESTA requires the same information as the paper I-94W form that VWP travelers currently fill out en route to the U.S.

### VWP Expansion

The United States has recently announced plans to expand the VWP, and beginning **Nov. 17, 2008**, eligible citizens and nationals from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, South Korea, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia will be able to travel to the United States under the VWP provided they have an e-passport and an approved authorization via ESTA.

#### ***VWP Expansion Countries\****

Czech Republic	Lithuania
Estonia	Slovakia
Hungary	South Korea
Latvia	

*\* ESTA required November 17, 2008*

### ESTA Applications

ESTA is a free, automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the U.S. under the VWP. It requires the same information as the paper I-94W form that VWP travelers currently fill out en route to the U.S. ESTA applications may be completed online at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. The ESTA Web site, including the help section, is currently available in 16 languages, though all application responses must be provided in English.

### ESTA Requirement for Established VWP Countries

Effective Jan. 12, 2009, all VWP travelers will be required to obtain an approved authorization via ESTA before traveling to the U.S. under the VWP.

#### ***Established VWP Countries\****

Andorra	Luxembourg
Australia	Monaco
Austria	The Netherlands
Belgium	New Zealand
Brunei	Norway
Denmark	Portugal
Finland	San Marino
France	Singapore
Germany	Slovenia
Iceland	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Italy	Switzerland
Japan	United Kingdom
Liechtenstein	

*\* ESTA required January 12, 2009*

### ESTA – Apply Now!

ESTA applications are free and may be submitted at any time prior to travel. Once approved, an ESTA authorization generally will be valid for up to two years or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever comes first. Authorizations will be valid for multiple entries into the U.S. DHS recommends that ESTA applications be submitted as soon as an applicant begins making travel plans. If you need assistance completing an application, a friend, relative, personnel in the travel industry, or other third parties may file an application on your behalf.