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US-VISIT BEGINS TESTING RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE BORDER SECURITY AND TRAVEL
Test Locations in Arizona, New York and Washington State Land Ports

WASHINGTON, DC, August 8, 2005 – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has begun testing the US-VISIT Program's next phase of implementation, which uses radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to more efficiently record the entries and exits of visitors who are currently issued an I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record) at our land borders. Five U.S. land border ports will test the RFID technology from August 4, 2005, through early summer of 2006. The ports are Nogales East (Deconcini) and Nogales West (Mariposa) in Arizona; Alexandria Bay (Thousand Islands) in New York; and Pacific Highway and Peace Arch in Washington state.

US-VISIT is a continuum of security measures that collect biometric and biographic information from visitors at U.S. visa-issuing posts around the world, and upon their arrival in and departure from U.S. air, sea and land border ports. Experience has shown that the US-VISIT enrollment process is fast, easy to understand and simple for visitors.

The testing will evaluate the ability of US-VISIT equipment to read information from RFID "tags" embedded in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Forms I-94A, the standard arrival and departure record issued at ports of entry. Those forms will continue to be issued to visitors holding nonimmigrant visas, those entering under the provision of the Visa Waiver Program and Mexican Border Crossing Card holders planning stays longer than 30 days and/or traveling outside the border area. The RFID tags only contain unique serial numbers. Only U.S. government officials may link the tag number to the visitors' biographic and biometric record. RFID technology reads the tag and records the visitor's entry and exit by securely transmitting the tag's serial number to the US-VISIT reader and database.

"By testing this promising use of technology, we are taking another step to transform the way we gather information about entries and exits at our borders," said Jim Williams, Director of the US-VISIT Program at DHS. "With the innovative use of technology, we can protect our citizens and visitors from threats to our security and allow valuable trade and travel into the U.S. to continue and thrive."

RFID technology can potentially enhance US-VISIT's capacity to match visitors' entries to exits without increasing processing time at land borders or affecting the speed at which a visitor leaves the

United States. The RFID technology testing is largely transparent to visitors, requiring no additional stops by vehicles or pedestrians entering or exiting the five ports.

Through public forums, media briefings and advertising in border communities, US-VISIT is educating visitors about RFID's incorporation into land border entry-exit procedures.

In particular, US-VISIT is highlighting to visitors who cross at these test ports the importance of making the Form I-94A visible when they cross the border to ensure optimal reading of the RFID tag. Visitors should make the Form I-94A visible upon entering or exiting the country and should secure it with other immigration-related documents at all times while in the United States.

"This test enables us to explore the potential of RFID to achieve US-VISIT's goals," Williams said. The goals of US-VISIT are to enhance the security of our citizens and visitors; facilitate legitimate travel and trade; ensure the integrity of our immigration system; and protect the privacy of our visitors.

The five test locations were chosen to thoroughly evaluate the capability of the technology in a variety of weather and traffic conditions as US-VISIT will only deploy a fully tested system.

US-VISIT protects the privacy of visitors. There are layers of defense to ensure privacy: no personal information will be included on the RFID tag; and the serial number on the tag cannot be changed. Additionally, personal information is only processed within DHS databases and RFID technology tags are tamper-proof and difficult to counterfeit, with security features to prevent the misuse of information.

For more information, visit www.dhs.gov/us-visit.

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