

# Is your U.S. passport expiring this year?

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If you have a U.S. passport that expires in 2016, the State Department is urging you to renew it now.

The State Department is expecting a surge in renewals of 10-year passports issued in 2006 and 2007. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative went into effect in 2007 which required anyone (including U.S. citizens) traveling by air to the U.S. from all foreign countries (including Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda) to have a valid passport. During 2006 and 2007, millions of U.S. citizens were applying for passports due to the new requirements – 12.1 million in 2006 and 18.6 million in 2007.

This year, the State Department anticipates 16 million applications, and 20 million in 2017. This will cause delays in the processing of passports, so it is imperative that you renew in advance. On average, processing takes four to six weeks. However, during particularly heavy periods the wait might extend to 10 weeks. As of Feb. 8, the wait is six weeks for routine processing and three weeks for expedited processing. The wait for passports being expedited after an in-person visit to an agency is eight business days.

For Flight and Flight Service employees, please consult your manual regarding procedures for renewing your passport.

The State Department also says another reason to renew now is that many countries are regularly enforcing a requirement for at least six months validity on a U.S. passport. Many Americans have been denied entry at foreign airports and borders because their passports had less than six months validity. For example, the 26 European countries comprising the Schengen area require U.S. passports be valid for at least 90 days beyond the traveler's intended date of departure. Some Schengen countries assume all travelers will stay the full three months allowed for visa-free travel, meaning a visitor may not be admitted unless his or her passport is valid for at least six months, regardless of the duration of the stay.

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This requirement may also apply if a traveler is transiting a Schengen airport for several hours en route to a non-Schengen destination. For all other destinations worldwide, the State Department recommends that those traveling ensure that their passport has at least six months of validity beyond their dates of international travel to avoid any disruptions to their plans.

If you have any further questions, please visit [The Department of State's](#) website.