

Client Alert

A report
for clients
and friends
of the firm July 2003

Visa Waiver Program Machine Readable Passports

Effective October 1, 2003, all visitors coming to the United States using the Visa Waiver Program will, in addition to the other visa waiver requirements, be required to present a machine readable passport. This requirement, originally slated to take effect on October 1, 2007 was accelerated to October 1, 2003 by Section 417 of the USA PATRIOT ACT. Those individuals not in possession of a machine readable passport by October 1, 2003 must apply for a new passport or apply for a nonimmigrant visa at a United States Embassy or Consulate, **prior** to coming to the United States. Countries currently authorized to participate in the Visa Waiver Program are:

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

*Please note that citizens of Belgium have been required to present machine readable passports since May 15, 2003. Additional information regarding the Visa Waiver Program can be found at the United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs at <http://travel.state.gov/vwp.html>

The purpose of machine readable passports is to aid the United States border security efforts by arranging biographic information on the passport data page according to international specifications. This allows

machine passport readers at ports of entry to quickly download an individual's information and compare it to information stored in existing databases.

Processing times may be delayed as the number of passport applications increases, so we recommend that all foreign nationals from visa waiver countries obtain new machine readable passports as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact the Proskauer immigration attorney who regularly handles your matters.

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Proskauer Rose counsels in all areas of immigration, nationality and consular law.

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