



*Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

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NEW U.S. VISA PROCEDURES MEAN APPLICANTS SHOULD APPLY *EARLY*

In a change of procedures that will have important consequences for New Zealanders traveling to the United States, most persons between the ages of 16 and 60 who need a nonimmigrant visa to travel to the United States will now require a personal interview with a consular officer at the Consulate General in Auckland to determine their eligibility. In general, applicants should no longer expect to receive a visa without a personal interview. This is a global policy change that will affect all applicants for U.S. visas around the world.

This change will substantially increase the time needed to process visa applications. Travelers to the U.S. who are not eligible for the Visa Waiver program (e.g. students, workers, exchange visitors, or anyone who wishes to stay more than 90 days) should apply for a visa well in advance of their expected date of departure. We recommend that such applicants purchase tickets for the United States only after receiving a visa.

Most New Zealanders visit the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Those who qualify for the VWP – basically those who intend to travel for general business or pleasure purposes and stay less than 90 days – may continue to use the VWP and will not require an interview with a consular officer. Travelers who have a criminal conviction, have overstayed during a previous U.S. visit, or have been denied either admission to the United States or a visa do not qualify for the VWP. In addition, travelers seeking to enter the United States for certain specific purposes (study, work, etc.) may not use the VWP.

Applicants will continue to pay the visa application fee through NZ Post, and mail their applications, passports, and any supporting documents to the Consulate General as they do now. The Consulate General will soon institute an appointments system that will allow applicants to schedule a time for an interview via a 0900-call service. Every effort will be made to schedule an appointment on a day of the applicant's choosing, but we cannot guarantee that all such requests will be accommodated. Interviews will not be conducted on a walk-in basis. Appointments will be required except in cases of genuine emergency. Applicants will be asked to submit their passports, applications and any supporting documents prior to the interview so that appropriate checks can be performed in advance.

Processing a visa application and conducting an interview will extend the processing time of each case. The Consulate General will process each case as expeditiously as possible. Proof of ties to New Zealand is required in support of all visa applications.

Please keep in mind that issuance of a visa is never guaranteed. There may be additional processing requirements before a final decision to issue or deny the visa is made. And, although a visa may be issued, it is not a guarantee of admission to the United States. Immigration inspectors at U.S. ports of entry make that determination.