



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

July 25, 2003

**TRAVELERS TO THE U.S. ARE URGED TO DOUBLE-CHECK  
VISA REQUIREMENTS AND SHOULD APPLY EARLY  
AS NEW REGULATIONS ARE IMPLEMENTED.**

Travelers to the United States are reminded that as of next week they may require a personal interview with a consular officer at the Consulate General in Auckland before they are able to travel to or through the United States.

The change applies to travelers between the ages of 16 and 60 who need a nonimmigrant visa to travel to the United States. In general, applicants should no longer expect to receive a visa without a personal interview. All applicants are reminded that the earlier they check on U.S. travel requirements, the less likely they are to run into difficulties.

This is a global policy change that will affect all applicants for U.S. visas around the world. This policy has been phased in over the last few months but must be fully implemented by all U.S. consular sections worldwide as of August 1, 2003.

Here in New Zealand the change will mean that interviews are required for up to 15,000 people who are either New Zealanders or third-country-nationals residing in New Zealand.

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, working journalists, 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.

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.

**Another change that may impact on some New Zealand travellers  
comes into effect on October 1, 2003.**

Citizens of all countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) who wish to enter the United States visa-free must present a machine-readable passport (MRP). Most New Zealand citizens already hold MRPs issued by the New Zealand government and will continue to enjoy the benefits of the VWP as before. Alternatively, if travelers wish to retain their old style passport, they must have a valid US visa in it to visit or transit the United States. Travelers applying for a visa to enter the United States are not required to obtain MRPs.

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.

It is important that anyone travelling to the United States carefully checks that they comply with current regulations well in advance of their intended travel. The onus is on the traveler to ensure that they have correct documentation.

Information on current regulations can be found at  
**<http://usembassy.org.nz>** or **<http://unitedstatesvisas.gov>**  
Alternatively anyone in any doubt should contact the Consulate in Auckland  
with plenty of time to spare.

**The Consulate's telephone number is (09) 303 27 24**

The Consulate does make every attempt to reply to queries promptly,  
but please understand that the volume of calls means that patience may be required.  
Again the earlier travelers begin checking out their individual circumstances the better.

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