



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Office of the Chief Financial Officer  
Finance Office

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Travelers

FROM: Jon P. Alexander  
Director, Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Transmittal Number 27

DATE: May 11, 2011

In order to ensure a smooth and timely foreign travel process, effective May 9, 2011, all foreign travel packages and all inquiries must be submitted to your Foreign Travel Coordinator (FTC) at your servicing Line/Corporate Office Headquarters prior to being sent to the NOAA Travel Office (NTO) for processing. See NOAA Travel Regulation (NTR) [301-2.5](#) for a list of officials who can authorize foreign travel. Once the foreign travel package is approved and the [Country Clearance Cable](#) processed, the package will be sent by your FTC to the NTO to obtain any necessary passports and/or visas.

Foreign travel packages sent to the NTO prior to being sent to the FTC will cause processing delays since the package will have to be sent back to the FTC for approval. Once the NTO processes the foreign travel package, the official passport with all of the necessary visa(s) will be returned to the contact designated on the [Foreign Travel Checklist](#). Please visit the [NTO website](#) for more information on processing foreign travel packages.

As our goal is to provide the best possible foreign travel service for NOAA travelers, it is also important to submit a **complete** foreign travel packages since incomplete packages will also cause processing delays which could ultimately result in a canceled trip. Please note that the NTO will no longer process foreign travel packages without approved travel authorizations. A **complete** foreign travel package consists of:

- A completed [Foreign Travel Checklist](#);
- One copy of an [approved travel authorization](#);
- Up-to-date (yearly) [Defensive Travel Briefing](#);
- An official passport and/or [passport application/passport letter/passport photos](#); and
- Any necessary [visa applications](#) and/or visa photos/letters of invitation, if applicable.

Since lead time requirements for passports and visas are dictated by the Department of State (DOS) and the embassies, it is important to allow adequate lead times as follows:

- 4 to 6 weeks to process applications for official passports.
- Passport applications submitted with less than 4 weeks processing time must include an emergency expedite letter addressed to Ms. Battie Stewart, Chief, and Official Travel Branch.
  - Seven business days if visas are not required.
  - 10 to 15 business days for most visas, with the exception of:
    - 15 to 20 business days to obtain visas for China, Spain, or Vietnam;
    - 6 weeks to obtain visas for Russia or India; and
    - 2 months to obtain visas for Cuba.

Please review the administrative requirements for foreign travel on the NTO website for more information on lead time requirements and how to submit complete foreign travel packages for processing. Visit our web page to view or to update your NTR, at <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/travel.htm>

Please contact Chasity Donaldson on (301) 444-2129, if you have any questions regarding this transmittal.

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Travelers  
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1. Filing Instructions for the NOAA Travel Regulation (NTR). Replacement pages for your NTR are as follows:

<u>Remove</u>	<u>Insert</u>
Page 306-i dated November 1, 2009	Page 306-i dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-3-1 thru 306-3-4 dated November 1, 2009	Pages 306-3-1 thru 306-3-3 dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-4-1 thru 306-4-2 dated November 1, 2000	Pages 306-4-1 thru 306-4-2 dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-5-1 dated May 1, 2009	Pages 306-5-1 dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-5-2 dated November 1, 2009	Pages 306-5-2 dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-5-3 thru 306-5-4 dated October 1, 2005	Pages 306-5-3 thru 306-5-4 dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-5-5 dated July 1, 2005	
Pages 306-6-1 thru 306-6-2 dated November 1, 2009	Pages 306-6-1 thru 306-6-2 dated May 11, 2011
Pages 306-7-1 thru 306-7-20 dated November 1, 2009	This section has been abolished dated May 11, 2011

2. Explanation of Changes. The attached pages clarify:

- Where foreign travel packages are submitted for processing;
- Foreign travel requirements and lead times frames; and
- Official passport requirements.

**NOAA TRAVEL REGULATION (NTR) CHECKSHEET FOR CHAPTERS 300 and 301**

Following is a list of pages currently in effect in the NTR. This check sheet is to be used to verify the accuracy of the NTR.

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**NOAA TRAVEL REGULATION CHECKSHEET FOR CHAPTERS 302 and 306**

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7-1.....16		7-2..... abolished	
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		7-4..... abolished	
<b><u>Part 302-9</u></b>		7-5..... abolished	
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**CHAPTER 306–FOREIGN TRAVEL**

Part	
306-3	Administrative Requirements
306-4	Country Clearance Cables
306-5	Official Passports
306-6	Official Visas
306-7	Section abolished

**PART 306-3--Administrative Requirements**

Sec.

- 306-3.1 Where can I find foreign travel information?
- 306-3.2 Who processes foreign travel packages for NOAA?
- 306-3.3 What is a “complete” foreign travel package?
- 306-3.4 What happens when an incomplete foreign travel package is submitted?
- 306-3.5 Is a “Defensive Travel Briefing” required for foreign travel?
- 306-3.6 What will help ensure my safety as a Government employee traveling on official business?
- 306-3.7 How can I help ensure foreign travel packages will be processed in time for my travel?
- 306-3.8 What are the processing-time requirements for foreign travel packages that do not require visas or passports?
- 306-3.9 Does NOAA obtain official passports and visas for invitational travelers on foreign travel?
- 306-3.10 What information must be included on the travel authorization for an invitational traveler on foreign travel?
- 306-3.11 How is a foreign travel package processed?

**306-3.1 Where can I find foreign travel information?**

You can find foreign travel information at our travel website:  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.html>

**306-3.2 Who processes foreign travel packages for NOAA?**

Both the Line/Corporate Office Foreign Travel Coordinator (FTC) and the NTO (Financial Policy and Compliance Division) play a role in processing all foreign travel packages.

**306-3.3 What is a “complete” foreign travel package?**

A complete foreign travel package consists of:

- 1) A completed “Foreign Travel Checklist”;  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/TR.306-7.pdf>
- 2) One photocopy of the approved travel authorization with a travel authorization number assigned by the Line/Corporate Office. If the traveler is applying for a new official passport or renewing an official passport, a passport letter **must** accompany the package. The passport letter can be located at:  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm>
- 3) A certificate of completion for the “Defensive Travel Briefing.” Defensive Travel Briefings are completed annually and must be submitted before the authorization can be processed in Travel Manager (TM).
- 4) Passport forms, passport photos (which must meet Department of State [DOS] requirements), and passports.
- 5) If applicable, visa applications, visa photos and letters of invitation, which can be obtained @ <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.html> under “Official Visa Requirements.” Please note, your Line or Corporate Office may have additional internal requirements.

**306-3.4 What happens when an incomplete foreign travel package is submitted?**

Both the traveler and the document preparer will be notified via email whenever an incomplete package is received. NOTE: missing documentation/information will cause delays in the processing of your travel package which may result in the trip being delayed or canceled. Visit the NOAA Travel website for more information @ <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.html>

**306-3.5 Is a “Defensive Travel Briefing” required for foreign travel?**

Yes. “Defensive Travel Briefings” are required for all employees traveling abroad and does not include invitational travelers. The briefing must also be submitted before the authorization will be processed in Integrated Travel Manager (ITM). The “Defensive Travel Briefing” consists of an on-line Power Point presentation and a certificate of completion, which is located at the Commerce Learning Center (CLC). The entire presentation must be viewed and the certificate of completion must accompany the foreign travel package and submitted to the NTO annually. The certificate of completion confirms that the traveler has read the on-line presentation. **Your Foreign Travel Authorization will not be processed in ITM, without the briefing being faxed to the NTO. The NTO fax number is (301) 413-3066.**

**306-3.6 What will help ensure my safety as a Government employee traveling on official business?**

- 1) Sign the official passport immediately upon receipt;
- 2) Renew passports 6 months before they expire;
- 3) Obtain visas for any in-transit travel; and
- 4) Ensure that country clearance cables are processed by your FTC and/or International Activities Office.

**306-3.7 How can I help ensure foreign travel packages will be processed in time for my travel?**

Provide adequate processing-time for foreign travel packages by using the following procedures:

- 1) Plan ahead - Determine well ahead of travel dates the documentation needed, i.e., an approved foreign travel authorization, an annual briefing, an official passport, and whether or not visas are necessary. Separate documentation is required for each traveler. **Always provide your FTC and the NTO with a completed foreign travel checklist that includes your document preparer and phone number.**
- 2) Act promptly - Allow the proper processing-time necessary to obtain passports and visas. Passports/visas will not be sent to you until **all** documentation is received.

**306-3.8 What are the processing-time requirements for foreign travel packages that do not require visas or passports?**

A seven business day processing-time is required for foreign travel packages that do not require any action by the NTO, (i.e., the processing of passports and/or visas.) See NTR, [Chapter 306-4](#), [306-5](#), and [306-6](#) for specific processing-time requirements. Allow adequate lead times, accordingly. You may also review foreign travel lead times @ <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.ForeignTravelLeadTimes.pdf> Your Line or Corporate Office may have additional internal requirements.

**306-3.9 Does NOAA obtain official passports and visas for invitational travelers on foreign travel?**

No. The NTO does not process any paperwork for invitational travel, including passports, visas, and the approval of travel authorizations in TM. Invitational travelers are expected to obtain their own personal passports and visas. However, NOAA will reimburse passport and visa fees for invitational travelers on foreign travel when approved on the travel authorization.

**306-3.10 What information must be included on the travel authorization for an invitational traveler on foreign travel?**

The following statement must be annotated in the remarks section of the travel authorization: “The individual named above is traveling at the invitation of the U.S. Government. Although not a formal representative of the U.S. Government, this individual is considered of sufficient character and qualification to participate on this mission.”

**306-3.11 How is a foreign travel package processed?**

In order to ensure a smooth and timely foreign travel process, all foreign travel packages and all inquiries must be submitted to your FTC. Once the foreign travel package is approved and the [Country Clearance Cable](#) processed, the package will be sent by your FTC to the NTO to obtain any necessary passports and/or visas. Once the passport and/or visas have been obtained, the passport will be returned to the document preparer. Upon receipt of the official passport, the document preparer and the traveler should verify that the demographic information in the passport is correct if a new official passport was obtained and/or verify that the visa information is correct, when visas are obtained.

**PART 306-4--Country Clearance Cables**

Sec.

- 306-4.1 What are country clearance cables?
- 306-4.2 Why is there a need to prepare country clearance cables?
- 306-4.3 When is a country clearance cable prepared?
- 306-4.4 Who prepares country clearance cables?
- 306-4.5 What are the processing time requirements for country clearance cables?
- 306-4.6 What information is required for a country clearance cable?

**306-4.1 What are country clearance cables?**

Cables (or telegrams) are a means of communication within the foreign diplomatic network. Country clearance cables notify the Department of State officials in Washington, D.C., and embassy and post officers abroad, of a traveler's presence in a foreign country.

**306-4.2 Why is there a need to prepare country clearance cables?**

- 1) Department of State policy. Department of State policy requires embassy clearance for official travel to a foreign country;
- 2) Embassy information. Consular offices are required to know about all scientific activities conducted during official foreign travel. In some cases, the embassy will provide a contact at the embassy for the traveler. The embassy may request a meeting or report from the traveler;
- 3) Traveler safety. For travelers who have received country clearance, Department of State will provide assistance in situations including, but not limited to, political unrest, health emergencies, and crime;
- 4) Traveler's convenience. Travelers can receive consular assistance for lost or stolen passports as well as general assistance with hotel accommodations; etc...
- 5) Potential for clearance to be refused. The embassy may have knowledge of reasons or situations which would prohibit the visit during the proposed period, and may therefore refuse to provide clearance. In such cases, travelers would reschedule the visit to accommodate embassy recommendations.

**306-4.3 When is a country clearance cable prepared?**

Country clearance cables are prepared for employees traveling on official government business abroad and are sometimes processed for invitational travelers as well. Each Line/Corporate Office has either a Foreign Travel Coordinator (FTC) or an International Activities Office (IAO) that prepares country clearance cables for their employees. Contact your servicing FTC or IAO for more information.

**306-4.4 Who prepares country clearance cables?**

The FTC or IAO in your Line Office **is required** to prepare all country clearance cables. Each Staff Office within the Office of the Administrator is required to prepare all country clearance cables with the assistance, when needed, of the Office of International Affairs.

**306-4.5 What are the processing-time requirements for country clearance cables?**

At least 2-weeks processing-time is required for processing country clearance cables. Contact your servicing FTC or IAO immediately if 2 weeks processing-time is not possible.

**306-4.6 What information is required for a country clearance cable?**

- 1) Traveler’s name, title, and affiliation;
- 2) Purpose of travel - Include names of workshops/meetings and titles of all papers and presentations. Include names of institutional affiliations, and spell out acronyms;
- 3) Travel destination and flight itinerary. Specify dates in each city within each country;
- 4) A contact name in the foreign country, name of the inviting office, hotel name and address and phone numbers;
- 5) Indication of whether embassy assistance is requested. In most cases, there is no need to ask for embassy assistance and a simple closing paragraph that states that “no embassy assistance is requested” will suffice. However, if required (usually for high-level officials), the cable should be clear and specific about what is needed. The traveler should be aware that there may be an embassy charge for some services. Please note: Contact your Line or Staff Office for other internal requirements;
- 6) Current Official Passport Information; and
- 7) Emergency Contact Information.

**PART 306-5-Official Passports**

Sec.

- 306-5.1 As a NOAA employee traveling to an Outside Continental United States (OCONUS) location for official business, am I required to obtain an official passport?
- 306-5.2 Why must I use an official passport when traveling on official government business?
- 306-5.3 How do I apply for an official passport?
- 306-5.4 What is the processing-time for official passports?
- 306-5.5 Is there a charge to obtain an official passport?
- 306-5.6 What form do I use when I need to change the identifying information in my passport?
- 306-5.7 What form do I use to add additional visa pages to my official passport?
- 306-5.8 What form do I use if my official passport is lost or stolen?
- 306-5.9 What are the passport photo requirements?
- 306-5.10 What do I do with my official passport when I return from official travel?
- 306-5.11 What do I do with my official passport upon leaving Government service?
- 306-5.12 Can I keep my official passport for a souvenir?

**306-5.1 As a NOAA employee traveling to a foreign location for official business, am I required to obtain an official passport?**

Yes. All NOAA employees traveling to a foreign location on official business **must** obtain an official passport and official visas, if required, before leaving the United States. An official passport cannot be obtained for travel to Taiwan, and is not required for travel between the United States and U.S. territories. U.S. territories include American Samoa, Guam, Midway Islands, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, and Wake Island. The NTO strongly urges employees to carry a certified birth certificate when traveling between the U.S. and U.S. territories to avoid unnecessary problems. However, if you have an official or personal passport, you are expected to use your official or personal passport instead of birth evidence.

**306-5.2 Why must I use an official passport when traveling on official government business?**

The Department of State (DOS) requires employees traveling to a foreign location on official business to obtain an official passport for the following reasons:

- **Required visas** – A visa will not be granted for entry into a foreign country when the reason for travel to that country is stated as official business and the personal (tourist) passport is presented. In addition, a diplomatic or official visa cannot be stamped in a personal passport.
- **Foreign country entry and exit** – Some countries will deny entry at the border to someone seeking to enter on official government business who presents a personal passport. Also, problems may occur upon departure from a foreign country.

- **Violation of sovereignty** – Use of a personal passport when traveling in an official capacity misrepresents the true purpose for which the traveler has entered the country. This can have serious and adverse effects on our reciprocal relations with foreign countries. Employees of foreign governments must use official passports when they come to the U.S. on behalf of their governments. This is a traditional practice among governments and an internationally recognized policy.
- **Security concerns** – Should there be a problem while you are in the host country; the official passport provides quicker access to officials of the host country government and greater protection.

**306-5.3 How do I apply for an official passport?**

All passport forms (DS-11 and DS-82,) **must be completed on line** and printed on paper so the applicant can sign and date the application. Passport applications that print on more than one sheet of paper must be printed on one-sided sheets of paper and cannot be printed on one sheet of paper back-to-back. Passport applications can be found at: <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm>  
Each on-line passport application contains a 2-D Barcode, which enables the DOS to populate encrypted data, filled out by the applicant, into their system. **NOTE:** All employees must annotate “CROA” in the “Mail Passport to” section of the application. You will need to indicate your home address in the “Permanent Address” section of the application.

**306-5.4 What is the processing-time for official passports?**

The processing-time for official passports is 4 to 6 weeks and is dictated by the Department of State (DOS). Passport applications submitted with less than 4-6 weeks processing-time **must** include an emergency justification letter addressed to the DOS, Chief of Passport Services. The emergency justification does not guarantee that the foreign travel package will be processed in time for travel.

**306-5.5 Is there a charge to obtain an official passport?**

There is no charge for official passports since they are deemed no-fee passports. However, applicants who use the “DS-11, Application for Passport” may be charged a processing fee which is reimbursable via a travel voucher, as long as there is an approved travel authorization in place.

**306-5.6 What form do I use when I need to change the identifying information in my passport?**

In order to update identifying information in your official passport, you will use a DS-5504, which can be found at the following site:  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.DS-5504Instructions2010.doc>

**306-5.7 What form do I use to add additional visa pages to my official passport?**

In order to add additional visa pages to your official passport, you will use a DS-4085, which can be found at the following site:  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm>

**306-5.8 What form do I use if my official passport is lost or stolen?**

You must notify the NOAA Travel Office (NTO) **immediately** if your official passport is lost or stolen. You must apply in person for a new official passport using “First Time Passport Application” (DS-11) and “Lost or Stolen U.S. Passport”, (DS-64) applications, which can be found at the following site:  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm>

**306-5.9 What are the passport photo requirements?**

Passport photos **must** be 2" x 2" (excluding white borders), and must have a white or off-white background. The applicant’s image must be centered in the photograph with a 1/2" space between the top of the applicant’s head and the top edge of the photograph. Pictures must be cut down to correct size and must match the template provided on the passport application. Pictures not in conformation will be rejected. See the following DOS website for further information: [http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get\\_881.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get_881.html).

**306-5.10 What do I do with my official passport when I return from official travel?**

DOS security requirements dictate that all official passports be returned to the NTO for safekeeping in the official passport repository upon completion of foreign travel. Frequent foreign travelers or those on foreign blanket travel authorizations may retain official passports in a locked safe in their offices. **Official passports are the property of the Government, and are not the personal property of the traveler. Official passports must never be kept at home.**

**306-5.11 What do I do with my official passport upon leaving Government service?**

Upon leaving Government service, employees **must** return all valid official passports to the NTO for disposition. However, you may retain any invalid official passport.

**306-5.12 Can I keep my official passport for a souvenir?**

Yes. Employees who wish to retain their official passport for a souvenir must return their official passport with a memorandum of explanation to the NTO. The NTO will forward the official passport to the Department of State for cancellation. After cancellation, the official passport may be returned to the traveler for a souvenir.

**NOTE: It is at DOS discretion whether or not to return canceled passports back to the traveler for souvenir purposes.**

**PART 306-6-Official Visas**

Sec.

- 306-6.1 What is a visa?  
306-6.2 What is the processing-time for visas?  
306-6.3 How do I obtain a visa(s) in my official passport?  
306-6.4 Is there a listing I should use when verifying visa requirements for official travel?  
306-6.5 How do I read the “Official Visa Requirements” listing?

**306-6.1 What is a visa?**

A visa is a stamp affixed in a passport which allows you to enter and exit a foreign country.

**306-6.2 What is the processing-time for visas?**

The processing-time for visas is dictated by the various embassies. A 10 to 15 business day processing-time is required to obtain visas for most countries, with the exception of:

- 15 to 20 business days to obtain visas for China, Spain, or Vietnam;
- 6 weeks to obtain visas for Russia or India; and
- 2 months to obtain visas for Cuba.

**306-6.3 How do I obtain a visa(s) in my official passport?**

You will submit your official passport and any applicable visa documentation to your FTC for processing along with the rest of your foreign travel package. Visa requirements vary for each country. Some countries may require a visa application, and some may require visa photos or letters of invitation. Most countries require that the passport be valid at least 6 months or longer beyond the dates of travel before a visa can be issued.

**306-6.4 Is there a listing I should use when verifying visa requirements for official travel?**

You will use the “Official Visa Requirements” listing when verifying visa requirements for official travel, which can be found at the following site:  
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.visareq%2002%2016%202011.pdf>  
Do not use the “Foreign Entry Requirements” listing published by the DOS since it contains visa requirements for personal and private industry travel and differs from the visa requirements for official travel.

**306-6.5 How do I read the “Official Visa Requirements” listing?**

You should note the following when reading the “Official Visa Requirements:”

- 1) “**No visa required**” indicates the employee travels on their official passport **only**; and
- 2) “**Visa required**” indicates a visa is required, but applications and pictures are not required. When a visa is required, the NTO will submit applicable paperwork with the official passport to the appropriate embassy for a visa. Please note, pictures must be recent 2”x2” color photos (not photocopied) unless otherwise specified; and

**Original signatures are required on each visa application.**

**PART 306-7--Foreign Travel Documents**

This section has been abolished. You can view information from this section on the NTO website now:

“Official Visa Requirements”:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.visareq%2002%2016%202011.pdf>

“Foreign Travel Checklist”:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.Foreign%2520Travel%2520Checklist.docx>