

PART 306-5-Official Passports

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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](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.DS-5504Instructions2010.doc), 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](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm), 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](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm)” (DS-11) and “[Lost or Stolen U.S. Passport](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/FT.passport.htm)”, (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.

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.