



Media Note  
Office of the Spokesman  
Washington, DC  
August 9, 2005

## The Department of State to Begin Issuance of an Electronic Passport

The Department of State is developing an Electronic Passport that will enhance document and border security, while facilitating international travel for U.S. citizens. The Electronic Passport will integrate the latest concepts in electronic document protection and readability. The Department plans to issue the first full validity U.S. electronic passports in December 2005. By October 2006, all domestic passport agencies will issue electronic passports.

The new passport will combine facial recognition and contactless chip technology. The chip, which will be embedded in the cover of the passport, will hold exactly the same information that is printed in the passport: name, date of birth, gender, place of birth, dates of passport issuance and expiration, passport number, and photo image of the bearer. A digital signature will protect the stored data from alteration and mitigate the threat of photo substitution.

To address concerns that the chips may be susceptible to unauthorized reading (skimming in the industry parlance), the Department will incorporate anti-skimming technology in the front cover. The Department is also seriously considering incorporating basic access control (BAC) technology in the new passport. BAC prevents the chip from being accessed until the passport is opened and its machine-readable zone on the data page is read electronically. The anti-skimming feature and BAC, when taken together, will prevent unauthorized reading of the Electronic Passport.

The Department will provide more information on its website at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) as well as Questions and Answers for the media prior to implementation of the new passport.

**2005/772**

Released on August 9, 2005

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