

Business Immigration Weekly for August 7, 2015

8/7/2015

Practices: Immigration

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

The Department of Homeland Security recently announced that it would begin implementing new security requirements to the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program allows certain nonimmigrants to enter the United States as a Visitor for Business or Pleasure without having to previously secure a B-1/B-2 visa at their local U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad. A Visa Waiver Program traveler is granted a period of authorized stay of 90 days. Prior to entry, the traveler must register with the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) online and pay a nominal fee. Citizens and nationals of the following countries are eligible to participate in the Visa Waiver Program: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and United Kingdom.

The new security requirements include requiring all Visa Waiver Program users to use an e-passport, screening travelers with the INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization) Lost and Stolen Passport Database; and increasing the presence of U.S. federal air marshals on international flights from countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program bound for the United States. These changes are in line with the Department's increased in security measures initiated in November 2014 when the agency expanded the amount of data captured by ESTA before a traveler enters the United States.