



NEWS RELEASE

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Mexican Border Crossing Cards to Expire Soon

WASHINGTON – The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Department of State (DOS) today issued a reminder that the old Border Crossing Cards (BCCs) issued by INS to Mexican citizens will expire on September 30, 2001. Holders of the old Border Crossing Cards, Form I-186 or I-586, must replace them with the new "laser visa" card. The new card is both a BCC and a B1/B2 visitor's visa. Current law requires that all BCCs be replaced by September 30, 2001.

The new laser visa is a laminated, credit-card-style document that is valid for 10 years. Consular staff in Mexico photograph and fingerprint the applicants, adjudicate the cases, then electronically forward the data to INS, which manages the laser visa card production contract. When complete, the cards are returned to Mexico for delivery to the applicant by DOS.

The goal of the program is to avoid disruptions to cross-border travel and trade by replacing all the old Border Crossing Cards by the September 2001 deadline. Until the new BCC card arrives, applicants will be given temporary evidence that allows the applicant to travel.

DOS has been accepting applications for the new document since April 1, 1998. As of January 30, 2000, U.S. consular posts in Mexico adjudicated more than 3.4 million applications, approving 2.8 million. INS estimates that approximately 5.5 million old cards must be replaced. The posts that are accepting laser visa applications are located in Mexico City, Ciudad Juarez, Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Merida, Matamoros, Monterrey, Nogales, Nuevo Laredo, Tijuana, and at the Tijuana and the Mexicali Temporary Processing Facilities.

INS and DOS are currently implementing a major Mexico-wide public information effort, supported by the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, to make travelers aware of the approaching deadline.

In Mexico, visa information is available by calling 01-900-849-3737. In addition, visa information is available at no charge on the U.S. Embassy Internet homepage at www.usembassy.org.mx.