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New passport rules could cause delays and disruptions

New U.S. State Department rules requiring passports for more travel will lead to a surge in requests for the documents; so those planning to travel should apply for passports early to avoid delays.

Seventy-six Percent of U.S. citizens do not have Passports.

The City Clerk's office anticipates an increase in Passport issuance with the U.S. Department of State implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requirements for land and sea travel.

According to the Department of State, the WHTI requirements for land and sea travel are expected to be implemented in the summer. The proposed rules require most U.S. citizens entering the United States at sea or land ports to Present a valid passport.

"Residents planning to travel internationally need to apply for their passport early in order to avoid long delays and possible travel disruptions," stated City Clerk del Valle. He also noted that a U.S. Passport is valid for ten years. Additionally, for those 15 or younger it is valid for five years.

"When the WHTI requirements for air travel between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America were implemented last January, many travelers discovered long lines and delays in passport processing. The backlog created Passport processing times that doubled taking up to 12 weeks to receive a passport. These delays caused many people to experience travel interruptions and forced some to cancel trips.

To apply for a U.S. Passport for the first time, each applicant must appear in person at an official passport acceptance facility with proof of U.S. citizenship, two passport specific Photos and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver's license.