

USCIS Adds Passport Data in E-Verify Process for Foreign-Born Citizens

Enhancement Reducing Tentative Nonconfirmations

WASHINGTON—Last month, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) incorporated Department of State passport data into the E-Verify employment authorization program. This enhancement is already reducing the incidences of mismatches among foreign-born citizens.

A September 2007 E-Verify program evaluation found that foreign-born citizens were more likely to receive mismatches, known as Tentative Non-confirmations (TNCs), than U.S.-born citizens. Passport number checking capability for citizens providing a U.S. passport as Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification form) identification improves an already thriving program.

If the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the Social Security Administration (SSA) is unable to immediately confirm a citizen's work eligibility, USCIS can now check State Department records prior to issuing a TNC. If citizenship information provided on the Form I-9 matches those records, E-Verify will seamlessly confirm the individual's work authorization. Prior to this enhancement, the system would have issued a TNC, prompting a potentially "authorized" worker to resolve the mismatch issue.

Passport data inclusion builds upon previous initiatives aimed at reducing TNCs for foreign-born U.S. citizens. In May 2008, USCIS implemented a system-based and data-source enhancement to address mismatches. This enhancement reduced E-Verify U.S. citizenship-related mismatches (TNCs) by approximately 39% by adding an automated check against USCIS naturalization databases for all newly hired employees claiming U.S. citizenship who were not automatically employment authorized during the SSA check.

Additionally, foreign-born U.S. citizens who ultimately receive TNCs may now call USCIS directly rather than visiting an SSA office to resolve their cases. More than 60 percent of foreign-born U.S. citizens who have received a TNC have chosen this option and of those, more than 90 percent have led to a final determination of "work-authorized" over the telephone.

More than 113,000 employers currently participate in E-Verify and an average of 1,000 sign up each week. More than three million queries have been run through the system since Oct. 1, 2008; of those, more than 96.1 percent are automatically verified as employment authorized. Top industries using the system include telecommunications, administrative and support services, as well as professional, scientific, technical services, and food services.