

### What is ESTA?

- Internet-based travel authorization system maintained by Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- Method of pre-screening, used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP).
- Security measure that takes place before the traveler departs for the United States.

### Who may use ESTA?

- Travelers may apply for ESTA approval themselves.
- Family members may apply on behalf of other relatives, e.g. parent/child.
- Travel service providers may apply on behalf of their clients.
- Travelers with valid U.S. visas do not need an approved ESTA.

### How does ESTA work?

- Each traveler provides biographic and passport info, and answers personal background questions -- the same information already collected on the I-94W form used by VWP travelers.
- In most cases, travelers will receive one of the following responses within seconds: "Authorization Approved" (travel authorized), "Travel Not Authorized" (traveler must obtain a nonimmigrant visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate before traveling to the United States), or "Authorization Pending" (traveler should check back within 72 hours for a final response)
- ESTA will also respond with a tracking number that permits updates to the traveler's info.
- An ESTA approval is not a guarantee of admissibility -- a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer makes the final admissibility determination at the U.S. port of entry.

### When is ESTA required?

- The ESTA website will be available beginning August 1, 2008, and VWP travelers are encouraged to begin applying for voluntary ESTA approval to travel to the U.S. under the VWP at that time.
- Beginning January 12, 2009, all VWP travelers, including children, must have an individual ESTA authorization prior to travel.
- Applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, however, DHS recommends that applications be submitted no less than 72 hours prior to travel. (ESTA will, however, accommodate emergency travelers).

### Why should a VWP traveler use ESTA before January 12, 2009?

- ESTA authorizations are valid for up to two years.
- No specific travel plans are required in order to apply for an ESTA authorization.
- Avoid problems upon arrival in the United States.
- DHS will not initially collect a fee for ESTA applications, so there is no cost involved.
- After ESTA becomes mandatory, travelers who have not received ESTA approval may be denied boarding, experience delayed processing, or be denied admission at a U.S. port of entry.

### What does a traveler do when authorization is denied?

- Schedule appointment to apply for U.S. visa at nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

### Future Improvements:

- By October 15, the ESTA website will be available in a variety of different languages, including German. Answers, however, must be provided in English.
- ESTA will allow DHS to eventually eliminate the requirement that VWP travelers complete an I-94W prior to being admitted to the United States.