

## **REAL ID Q&A**

### **Q: Why is DHS implementing air travel in stages?**

A: On January 8, 2016, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced the following timetable for the implementation of the REAL ID Act for air travel:

- **Effective immediately**, the Department of Homeland Security will conduct outreach to educate the traveling public about the timeline below, and continue engagements with states to encourage compliance with REAL ID standards.
- **Starting July 15, 2016**, TSA, in coordination with airlines and airport stakeholders, will begin to issue web-based advisories and notifications to the traveling public.
- **Starting December 15, 2016**, TSA will expand outreach at its airport checkpoints through signage, handouts, and other methods.
- **Starting January 22, 2018**, passengers with a driver's license issued by a state that is still not compliant with the REAL ID Act (and has not been granted an extension) will need to show an alternative form of acceptable identification for domestic air travel to board their flight. To check whether your state is compliant or has an extension, click [here](#). Passengers with driver's licenses issued by a state that is compliant with REAL ID (or a state that has been issued an extension) will still be able to use their driver's licenses or identification cards.
- **Starting October 1, 2020**, every air traveler will need a REAL ID-compliant license, or another acceptable form of identification, for domestic air travel.

This timetable recognizes that some states must change their laws to comply with the REAL ID Act. It is also designed to provide an opportunity for members of the public to learn more about the implications of not having a REAL ID-compliant license, and so that individuals have an ample opportunity to replace their pre-REAL ID licenses with new compliant licenses or to obtain another acceptable form of identification.

### **Q: When will I need to change how I travel domestically?**

A: *Starting January 22, 2018*, passengers who have driver's licenses issued by a state that is not yet compliant with REAL ID and that has not received an extension will need to show an alternative form of acceptable identification for domestic air travel. Please see TSA's [website](#) for a list of acceptable forms of identification. Passengers who have licenses issued by a state that is compliant or that has an extension to become compliant with REAL ID requirements may continue to use their licenses as usual. For a list of states already in compliance or with an extension visit DHS's REAL ID webpage (<http://www.dhs.gov/real-id-enforcement-brief>). DHS continually updates this list as more states come into compliance or obtain extensions.

*Starting October 1, 2020*, every air traveler will need to present a REAL ID-compliant license or another acceptable form of identification for domestic air travel. A REAL ID compliant license

is one that meets, and is issued by a state that complies with, the REAL ID Act's security standards.

Travelers can check DHS's REAL ID [webpage](#) at any time to learn if your state is compliant and can check with your state's agency that issues driver's licenses about how to acquire a compliant license. The earlier your state becomes compliant, the more likely you will be able to acquire a compliant license as part of the normal renewal cycle.

**Q: How will the public be notified of these changes for air travel?**

A: On January 8, 2016, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced the timetable for the final phase of implementation to the REAL ID Act to inform the traveling public of changes that will be made for identification for domestic air travel effective January 22, 2018. DHS will conduct outreach to educate the traveling public about the timeline, and continue engagements with states to encourage compliance with REAL ID standards. Starting July 15, 2016, TSA, in coordination with airlines and airport stakeholders, will begin to issue web-based advisories and notifications to the traveling public. Starting December 15, 2016, TSA will expand outreach at its airport checkpoints through signage, handouts, and other methods.

**Q: Will minors need to have driver's licenses to fly domestically?**

A: TSA does not require children under 18 to provide identification when traveling with a companion within the United States. The companion will need acceptable identification.

**Q: Is a passport my only other option if my state is not compliant?**

A: No. TSA currently accepts several other forms of identity documents and will continue to do so. For more information on acceptable forms of identification for boarding aircraft, please see TSA's website (<http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/acceptable-ids>).

**Q: Is DHS trying to build a national database with all of our information?**

A: No. REAL ID is a national set of standards, not a national identification card. REAL ID does not create a federal database of driver license information. Each jurisdiction continues to issue its own unique license, maintains its own records, and controls who gets access to those records and under what circumstances. The purpose of REAL ID is to make our identity documents more consistent and secure.

**Q: Why is DHS announcing this now? Deadlines have been changed numerous times, so why can't this wait?**

A: Since 2013, in accordance with the phased enforcement plan announced by DHS, federal agencies have begun implementation at federal facilities and military bases. The Department has not previously announced a schedule for implementation for air travel. The time has come to complete implementation of the law, in support of the overall goal of ensuring the safety and security of the public.

**Q: Can states still receive extensions from DHS?**

A: Yes. DHS is continuing to provide extensions, as warranted. Extensions are granted for a maximum of one year and may be renewed if a state demonstrates continued progress towards compliance. Extensions are not a long-term alternative to a state becoming compliant. All states

must become compliant—both in terms of the law, but also to prevent the burden of additional documentation from falling on their residents.

**Q: What happens to travelers who show up without a compliant license? Will TSA turn them away?**

A: DHS has been working with states for years around REAL ID compliance and have provided technical assistance, grants and other support to them. We are also providing more than two years advance notice of implementation with respect to domestic air travel to allow ample time for all states to achieve compliance, or for potential air travelers to acquire an alternate form of ID if their state does not comply with REAL ID. Starting January 22, 2018, travelers who do not have a license from a compliant state or a state that has been granted an extension (a complete list of non-compliant states/ territories can be found [here](#)) will be asked to provide alternate acceptable identification. If the traveler cannot provide an acceptable form of identification, they will not be permitted through the security checkpoint. Starting October 1, 2020, every traveler will need to present a REAL ID-compliant license or another acceptable form of identification for domestic air travel.

**Q: Why are some states still not compliant? Isn't this law?**

A: REAL ID is a mandate on Federal agencies, restricting the circumstances under which they may accept state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards for official purposes. Participation by states is voluntary, although Federal agencies are prohibited from accepting driver's licenses or identification cards from noncompliant states for official purposes (e.g., boarding aircraft, accessing federal facilities, and entering nuclear power plants).

**Q: How does REAL ID implementation impact states that provide driver's licenses and IDs to certain non-citizens/undocumented immigrants?**

A: REAL ID allows compliant states to issue driver's licenses and identification cards where the identity of the applicant cannot be assured or for whom lawful presence is not determined. In fact, some states currently issue such noncompliant cards to undocumented individuals. These cards must clearly state on their face (and in the machine readable zone) that it is not acceptable for official purposes and must use a unique design or color to differentiate them from compliant cards. DHS cautions against assuming that possession of a noncompliant card indicates the holder is an undocumented individual, given that several states issue noncompliant licenses for reasons unrelated to lawful presence.