

INFORMATION FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

There is no entitlement to a U.S. visa. The Nationality Act states that applicants are presumed to be ineligible unless they can demonstrate otherwise. The issuance of a visa indicates that a U.S. consular officer has reviewed an individual's application, and that the officer has made a preliminary determination that the individual is eligible to enter the country for a specific purpose.

A visa allows a person to travel to the United States as far as the port of entry – in this case the airport or the border crossing. Then an immigration inspector makes the decision whether or not to allow the person into the country. Only the immigration officer has the authority to allow a person into the U.S., and it is he/she who decides how long the person can stay for a particular visit. You should have details of your trip itinerary with you to show to the immigration officer, especially if you plan to visit other cities or take a vacation while you are in the U.S.

All visa applications are considered individually on their merits. Each applicant must qualify in his or her own right for a visa, whatever the purpose of the trip. There are a number of categories of ineligibility, including terrorists, convicted felons, and persons who pose a health risk.

The most common ground for ineligibility is that the applicant has failed to show compelling ties to his or her own country that would overcome the presumption that he or she is planning to become an immigrant and seek to stay in the U.S. Proof of family or business in your country may help. Also proof of regular or past participation by the company and named individuals in trade shows, such as an exhibitor list, letter from show management, or contracts and invoices with proof of payment, will also show that you have made business trips and returned to your country in the past.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, requirements for visa applications have stayed unchanged for the vast majority of countries outside the U.S. Fewer than thirty countries have been impacted by any new requirements, which generally entail extended periods for applications, appointments for interviews, review of applications, and the time required for issuance of new visas.

A majority of experienced businesspersons apply for and receive multi-entry visas. The period of this type of visa will vary from one to ten years, and is determined by the reciprocal agreements between the United States and the specific country. Even if you have a multi-entry visa, individuals seeking to visit the U.S. must apply for a specific

business visitor visa each trip. Do not assume because you have a multi-entry visa that you will automatically gain entry to the U.S. You must contact your U.S. Embassy or Consular office and receive a trip visa each time you wish to travel to the U.S. The advantage of having a previously approved multi-entry visa is that, generally, your request will be processed more quickly.

Remember that just because you are exhibiting in a trade show, you will not automatically gain entry to the United States.

The U.S. Department of State has added to its Web site information on visa wait times. For more comprehensive information, plus up-to-date news, please go to this website: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english.html>

To find an Embassy or Consulate General near you: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>