Immigration News: Automation of Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)

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For the past 50 years, foreign nationals arriving into the US have received paper I-94 forms. This paper form was important as it governed a travelers authorized period of stay. As of April 26, 2013, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) announced that the I-94 (arrival and departure record) will no longer be issued as a paper form upon arrival to the United States.   The automation of the I-94 form not only impacts foreign nationals, but also employers who rely on this information to verify legal status for employment. Here are some important facts to keep in mind with this change:

- **What happens when travelers enter the United States?** Upon arrival into the United States, CPB will scan the traveler's passport and generate an electronic arrival record. Travelers will receive an admission stamp showing the dates of admission, the class of admission and the admitted-until date.

- **How do travelers obtain their I-94 record?** To obtain a copy their I-94 (for verification of alien registration, immigration status or employment authorization) it's recommended that travelers visit www.cbp.gov/i94 immediately after entry in order to obtain a copy of their I-94. Travelers will be asked to verify admission details, and upon doing so will receive a copy of their electronic I-94 record. It's recommended that travelers print a copy and carry it with them in their passport.

- **Why is it important to obtain an electronic copy of the I-94 record?** The USCIS will continue to require foreign nationals to provide a copy of their I-94 record when requesting certain benefits. Additionally, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Social Security Administration will also require a copy of the I-94 record. Authorized workers may present a copy of their I-94 record to employers during the I9 eligibility verification process.

- **Does the automation of the I-94 impact all types of travel and foreign nationals?** Automated I-94 records only affect air and sea arrivals. Paper I-94 forms will still be issued for land border ports of entry. CPB will also continue to issue paper forms to certain classes of aliens, such as refugee's, certain asylees and parolees.

- **Where can a foreign national obtain more information if their I-94 form is incorrect?** If an individual can't retrieve their record, or if the information is incorrect, CPB recommends that the individual contact them through the "deferred inspection office". An inspection officer will be assigned to resolve the administrative error.

- **What are the benefits of this transition?** In the event that a traveler's stapled paper I-94 form is accidentally removed from their passport, or is lost, it's been time consuming and costly when requesting a replacement. The automation of the I-94 form will allow for a simpler recovery process if a traveler loses or misplaces their I-94, simply by reprinting a copy. Not to mention the CPB will tell you that the automation reduces processing time for travelers upon entry to the United States and has saved the agency millions of dollars in processing costs.

- **What are the disadvantages to this transition?** The burden is now on the traveler to access the CPB website and obtain a copy of their I-94 form. It's been my experience that travelers are not receiving this communication upon entry to the US and many of my immigrant workers are approaching me with concern that a crucial step was overlooked. As HR Professionals there is an opportunity for us to educate and assist individuals in the new process and ensure them that this change is designed to save travel time and can be done fairly quickly!

For more information please visit www.cpb.gov/i94 where you can find a FAQ page with additional information on the automation of the I-94 form.