

DHS Urges Public to Get REAL ID Ahead of May 7 Deadline; USVI Faces Rollout Delays

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem reminds travelers REAL ID will be required for air travel and federal building access. The USVI's updated credentials remain on hold pending TSA integration of new card design. Passports remain valid for air travel.

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Spirit Airlines at the Henry Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem issued a crucial reminder on Friday, urging Americans to secure their REAL ID credentials promptly. Highlighting the upcoming federal deadline, Secretary Noem emphasized, "If you plan on traveling, we need your help to prevent

delays and to prove your identity. Get your REAL ID. Starting May 7, 2025, you will need a REAL ID to travel by air to visit federal buildings in the United States. These IDs keep our country safe because they help prevent fraud and they keep our country safe. Please do your part to protect our country, go today and don't delay. To learn more go to DHS.gov/real-id."

However, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) [has announced](#) delays in issuing the newly redesigned REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses and identification cards. BMV Director Barbara Jackson-McIntosh stated in a press release on March 25 that the delay is due to awaiting confirmation from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) that the updated credentials are integrated into its national verification system.

Significant modifications were made to the REAL ID cards, including a new design, layout, and enhanced security features aligning with industry standards. Although these updated credentials have been submitted to TSA for integration, they have yet to be confirmed as fully operational in TSA's database. McIntosh clarified, "We did not want to issue the cards and then you may have been denied traveling or [subjected to] unnecessary scrutiny because the TSA employees would not have known that the VI has a new card design."

TSA is expected to incorporate the new Virgin Islands credentials into their verification system by April 2025, prior to the May 7 deadline. Until this occurs, distribution of these updated IDs remains on hold to avoid any confusion or travel complications. McIntosh hasn't provided a new update on the status of the integration, however once it is done, TSA agents will electronically scan and validate these new IDs at security checkpoints.

Virgin Islanders with existing valid REAL IDs do not need to take immediate action. However, those holding non-REAL ID licenses will automatically receive updated credentials once TSA confirms integration, the Bureau said. The BMV will notify affected individuals when their new cards are ready.

In response to potential confusion and community concerns, Senator Ray Fonseca has requested a Committee of the Whole hearing to clarify the Real ID Act implementation process. In a letter dated March 24 to Senate President Milton E. Potter, Fonseca highlighted, "This is not just about identification—it's about access to air travel, federal buildings, and critical services. Our residents deserve clarity and peace of mind."

For additional information or to schedule appointments, residents may contact the BMV through its website at bmv.vi.gov or by phone: St. Croix (340-713-4268), St. Thomas (340-774-4268), and St. John (340-776-6262).