

## **PASSPORT APPLICATIONS ARE CHANGING**

### *PROTECTING YOUR IDENTITY*

As from 22 September 2008 the British Embassy in Guatemala will be introducing interviews as part of the passport application process. Please allow time for applying for your passport, as you may require an interview.

#### **Background**

In 2007 the UK Identity and Passport Service (IPS) introduced compulsory passport interviews for all first time applicants aged 16 or over, as part of the application process. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), through their Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates, also began the introduction of interviews.

#### **Who will require an interview?**

**From 22 September 2008** the British Embassy in Guatemala will be introducing compulsory interviews for some applicants who:

- Are applying for a British passport for the first time.
- Are applying for a replacement passport following the loss or theft of more than one passport over a short period;
- Have changed their name, except if that change follows marriage, civil partnership, divorce or dissolution;
- Have not held a valid British passport for more than 10 years;
- Are renewing an old style blue passport;
- Hold a British Overseas Territories passport, other than Gibraltar.
- The British Embassy has the discretion to interview any applicant on a case by case basis.

If an interview is requested, applicants will be required to supply full documentation. The Embassy will notify you with what documents are required also see here [\[insert link to documentation required\]](#).

#### **Why are interviews necessary?**

Interviewing passport applicants has been established practice in many British Embassies and High Commission worldwide for a number of years and has proven to be an effective deterrent against passport fraud and identity theft. To bring our current procedures into line with the IPS in the UK, all FCO posts will adopt the same policy and approach to passport interviewing. This has become necessary to:

- Establish your eligibility and entitlement to a British passport;
- Prevent other people impersonating you and using your identity to commit fraud. Sadly, this is happening more frequently with distressing consequence for its victims.
- Reduce passport fraud and forgery; this sort of crime is becoming more sophisticated and more organised.
- To counter terrorist activity, making international travel safer and hassle-free;
- Prevent illegal entry into the UK and other countries.

Many UK banks, building societies and organisation now ask for photographic proof of identity prior to transacting business, with a valid passport increasingly being required. A misappropriated passport therefore can open the way to bank accounts, mortgages, benefits and many other services.

The interview has a vital role within the passport application, in ensuring that customers are the rightful owners of that "identity."

#### **How will I know I need an interview and how long it take?**

- Make sure you submit your passport application in plenty of time before you expect to travel.
- Don't leave it until the last minute.

Once the British Embassy has received a fully completed application they will establish that the customer's identity exists and that they are entitled to a British passport. If a customer requires an interview he/she will be notified accordingly and given a date, time and location to attend.

- You may have a long journey to your nearest Consular Office. Please allow plenty of time to attend an interview.
- They will also advise you what documents you need to bring with you to support your application. [Put link here to what documents are required]

The interview length is dependant on the type of application being made. On average it will take about [insert your post's average interview time] minutes and will be conducted in a professional manner, consisting mainly of questions confirming facts about a customer, which someone attempting to steal their identity may not know.

Questions asked will not be the same at every interview.

#### **When will I receive my passport?**

After your interview, we will still need to make some final checks so we cannot tell you at the interview if your application is successful. You will be notified at a later stage.

#### **Your needs at the interview office:**

When making an interview appointment, please let us know if you have any particular needs for your interview, for example:

- If you have a severe incapacity which you believe will prevent you from attending or taking part in an interview.
- An interpreter or sign language interpreter??
- A carer or parent to be present during the interview.
- Privacy because you do not wish to uncover your face in public – you will need to have your face uncovered during your interview??

**Customers should not make any travel arrangements until the new passport is received, as the embassy cannot be held responsible for costs incurred as a result of disrupted travel plans.**