

 Official website of the Department of Homeland Security



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

# Enhanced Drivers Licenses: What Are They?

State-issued enhanced drivers licenses (EDLs) provide proof of identity and U.S. citizenship, are issued in a secure process, and include technology that makes travel easier. They provide travelers with a low-cost, convenient alternative for entering the United States from Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean through a land or sea port of entry, in addition to serving as a permit to drive.

The Department has been working with states to enhance their drivers licenses and identification documents to comply with travel rules under the [Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative \(WHTI\)](#) ([/western-hemisphere-travel-initiative-basics](#)), effective June 1, 2009.

Enhanced drivers licenses make it easier for U.S. citizens to cross the border into the United States because they include

- a vicinity [Radio Frequency Identification \(RFID\)](#) ([/radio-frequency-identification-rfid-what-it](#)) chip that will signal a secure system to pull up your biographic and biometric data for the CBP officer as you approach the border inspection booth, and
- a Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) or barcode that the CBP officer can read electronically if RFID isn't available.

The top 39 land ports of entry, which process more than 95 percent of land border crossings, are equipped with RFID technology that helps facilitate travel by individual presenting EDLs or one of the other RFID-enabled documents.

## Alternative to Canadian Passport (#)

The Department has worked with Canadian provincial and federal officials to pursue enhanced drivers licenses as an alternative to the Canadian passport. Four Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec) are issuing EDLs to Canadian

citizens. Canadian citizens can present an EDL when entering the United States from Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean through a land or sea port of entry.

## Privacy Protection (#)

No personally identifiable information is stored on the card's RFID chip or can be transmitted electronically by the card. The card uses a unique identification number that links to information contained in a secure Department of Homeland Security database. This number does not contain any personally identifiable information.

When you get an enhanced drivers license, you will also receive:

- information on how to use, carry and protect your license, and
- a shielded sleeve that prevents anyone from reading your license.

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