

traveler to an Immigration Inspector in a nearby inspection booth.

#### **What is SENTRI?**

- SENTRI is an AIS Program that enables enrolled travelers to rapidly enter the United States through a dedicated commuter lane (DCL) at specific Land Border Ports-of-Entry.

- To be eligible to use SENTRI, you must be able to lawfully enter the United States and pass a three-part comprehensive background check. These record checks are conducted for all applicants (18 years of age and older) by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Customs Service, and Federal Bureau of Investigation.

- When an enrolled automobile approaches the inspection booth in the SENTRI lane, a radio frequency transponder that is affixed to the automobile emits radio signals that are picked up by receivers located at the port of entry. Each transponder has a unique number that retrieves a specific record in the SENTRI enrollment database. Within moments, this record, which contains a photograph and detailed information about the vehicle and its occupants, appears on a color monitor screen in front of the inspector. Next, each auto occupant swipes an identification card through a magnetic reader located at the inspection booth, (a process similar to using an ATM card). The inspector verifies that the vehicle's occupants are enrolled in the SENTRI system and authorizes the vehicle and its occupants to enter the United States. As at other ports of entry, the inspector may refer vehicles for a more thorough inspection. In addition, a small percentage of travelers are randomly chosen by computer and referred for a secondary inspection to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations of the SENTRI system.

#### **Are Security Checks Conducted in the AIS Programs?**

Yes. The Service requires that all AIS Programs perform various agency law enforcement database and criminal record checks. AIS travelers may also undergo additional random referrals and compliance checks to ensure that the participants remain in compliance with the program guidelines and the laws and regulations that govern entry into the United States.

#### **How Does This Rule Amend the Regulations?**

This rule extends the period of enrollment in the AIS programs from 1 year to 2 years. This change will significantly reduce the paperwork

burden on the general public and the inspection services while causing no reduction in the security of the automated inspection systems or the international border. The Service will continue to perform regular queries of the law enforcement databases on the enrolled travelers as well as requesting updates of information from enrolled travelers through periodic mailings. The Service will also continue to perform regular queries of the law enforcement databases on the enrolled travelers, as well as requesting updates of information from enrolled travelers through periodic mailings, if necessary. The Service will also continue to conduct random referrals and compliance checks to ensure that participants remain in compliance with the programs guidelines and the laws and regulations that govern entry into the United States.

#### **Why Is the Service Changing the Length of the Enrollment Period?**

With the growing popularity of the AIS programs particularly along the southern border, the large number of applicants has placed a strain on the ability of the enrollment centers to process all applications in a timely manner, resulting in extensive backlogs of applicants waiting to be processed. The annual renewal requirement further exacerbates this workload. Because the data provided at the time of enrollment by the traveler typically remains the same from year to year, the Service has determined that it does not require the re-submission of this data on an annual basis. However, the Service will continue to evaluate this and other aspects of the AIS programs to determine whether additional changes should be made at a later date.

#### **How Will the Service Measure Its Performance on Enrollments?**

An extension of the enrollment from 1 year to 2 years would aid the Service in its goal to reduce the enrollment backlog to 60 days by July 1, 2003. Thousands of applicants each year will no longer be required to visit the enrollment center, re-enroll or pay an additional application fee. By eliminating an extra enrollment fee, a reduction in cost for program participation is returned to the traveler. Fewer visitors to the enrollment centers decrease the strenuous workload for the Service. Attention could then be focused on the reduction of the thousands of applicants backlogged instead of processing yearly re-applications.

#### **If I am Already Enrolled in an AIS Program, Will My Enrollment Period Be Automatically Extended to 2 Years?**

Yes, the Service will consider your enrollment period to be valid 2 years from the date of your last enrollment approval. You will not have to pay an additional enrollment fee for the extension.

#### **What if My Visa or Immigration Status Is Valid for Less Than 2 Years When I Submit my Application?**

The actual authorization of any AIS participation is determined by the individual's underlying immigration status. The individual's immigration status must be valid at all times to participate in the program and they must be in possession of all appropriate immigration and identity documents at the time of each entry. The initial period of approval will be limited in accordance with the underlying immigration status, but can be extended, without application or fee, for the full 2-year period once the participant establishes the appropriate visa or immigration status validity.

#### **Has the Service Consulted With Other Entities in Developing This New Rule?**

The Service has consulted with numerous stakeholders and received positive feedback on this change from all entities. These stakeholders include the Border Trade Alliances, individual travelers, business and trade associations, congressional officials, and the other federal inspection service agencies involved in the affected programs.

#### **Good Cause Exception**

The Service's implementation of this rule as an interim rule, with provision for post-promulgation public comment, is based upon the "good cause" exception found at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) and (d)(1). The reason for immediate implementation is as follows: This rule is intended to benefit both the traveling public and the Service by decreasing the workload at the enrollment centers and alleviating the backlog of pending applications. In addition, this rule relieves the burden on the program participant of having to file an application annually and will also reduce the cost to the participant since the participant will not have to pay the additional enrollment fee for the second year. As previously stated, having as much advance information about as many travelers to the United States as possible promotes greater security of the border and the United States. In addition, since the events of September 11, 2001, ports-of-entry have operated