



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS Update

October 17, 2007

USCIS ANNOUNCES CENTRALIZED FILING LOCATION FOR THE H-2A TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROGRAM

WASHINGTON – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced today a new customer service initiative to improve the H-2A (temporary/seasonal agricultural worker) petition process.

On August 10, 2007, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez announced a series of reforms to strengthen border security and address immigration challenges. One of those goals was streamlining the H-2A program. To accomplish this goal, USCIS will institute a series of changes to provide agricultural employers with an orderly and timely flow of legal workers while protecting laborers' rights.

Among the first of those changes is the establishment of a special USCIS unit dedicated to processing H-2A petitions at the USCIS California Service Center (CSC). The CSC has established special mailing addresses for all H-2A filings. Effective today, H-2A petitioners are encouraged to use the following addresses for all H-2A petitions. (This change will become mandatory once USCIS publishes a notice in the *Federal Register*.)

For Direct Mail:

**U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
California Service Center
ATTN: H-2A Processing Unit
P.O. BOX 10140
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-1040**

For non-United States Postal Service (USPS) deliveries (e.g. private couriers):

**U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
California Service Center
ATTN: H-2A Processing Unit
24000 Avila Road, Room 2312
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677**

Each H-2A petitioner is encouraged to mark the outside of his or her envelope with “H-2A” and to attach to the top of the petition package a separate sheet saying “H-2A.” This will ensure quick identification of the H-2A case throughout the petition’s processing at CSC.

If an H-2A petition is received at a different Service Center that Service Center will expeditiously forward the petition to the CSC for processing. In the near future, USCIS will post special filing instructions to Form I-129 requiring all H-2A petitions to be filed at the CSC.

USCIS understands the special circumstances faced by employers in the agriculture industry and their need for temporary workers. USCIS is processing H-2A petitions as quickly as possible. H-2A petitioners are reminded that they may include a pre-paid mailer with their petition in order to receive notice of USCIS’s decision sooner. A prepaid mailer is essentially a self-addressed envelope, with postage paid by the addressee that USCIS may use for mailing a document back to the petitioner.

USCIS’s customer service initiative plan will include a number of other activities. USCIS will host annual public meetings to address questions and suggestions for improvement to the H-2A program and will modify internal systems to notify employers of petition approvals through email notifications. USCIS will also work with the Department of Labor to encourage state workforce agencies to verify the employment eligibility of referred workers, including encouraging employers to enroll in the E-Verify program. USCIS is further committed to issuing periodic updates highlighting future changes to the H-2A program.