

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

6 May 2013

**CHN104415.E**

China: Procedure and requirements to obtain a biometric passport, including date they started to be issued; indicators that the passport is biometric, including symbols  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### 1. Date of First Issue for Biometric Passports

Sources indicate that China began to issue biometric passports on 15 May 2012 (China 16 May 2012; Dalian Municipal Government 17 May 2012). The identity-document checking service operated by Keesing Reference Systems writes that a passport that "contains a contactless chip in the back cover" was first issued in February 2012 (n.d.a). According to the official web portal of the Chinese government, traditional passports may continue to be used for as long as they are valid (China 16 May 2012).

*People's Daily Online*, a Chinese news website founded in 1997 (*People's Daily Online* n.d.), reports that electronic passports for public affairs were first issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 1 July 2011 (5 July 2011). These passports contain a "'component layer,' consisting of microchips, electronic circuits, and other parts" inside the back cover, which includes "the passport owner's name, sex and personal photo as well as the passport's term of validity and [the] digital certificate of the chip" (ibid.).

### 2. Procedures for Obtaining a Biometric Passport

According to the *Passport Law of the People's Republic of China*,

A citizen who intends to go abroad for non-official purposes, such as residing, visiting relatives, studying, working, travelling or engaging in business activities, shall apply in person for an ordinary passport to the entry-exit control department of the public security organ under the people's government at or above the country level where his residence is registered. (China 2006, Art. 5)

[English version of the Chinese Government's Official Web Portal]

A citizen who applies for an ordinary passport shall present his resident identity card, resident household registration book, recent bareheaded photos and the materials related to his reasons for application. (ibid., Art. 6)

An article published on 22 August 2012 on the Chinese Government's Official Web Portal reports that the Ministry of Public Security announced that

China will ease a restriction covering the household registration that people must hold when applying for passports and travel passes in six big cities ... [and that] [t]hose who work or study at higher education institutions in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen will soon be allowed to apply for passports and travel passes there, even if they do not hold household registrations in these six cities. (China 22 Aug. 2012)...

Apart from the household registration certificate, identification card and temporary residence permit, an employed person will need a statement from the city's social security department confirming at least one year of payment to social security programs. A college student will need a statement from his college on the enrollment. (ibid.)

The same article indicates that this new policy was planned to come into effect on 1 September 2012 (ibid.).

The Xinhua News Agency reports that the procedure of applying for new biometric passports remains the same as the process to apply for a traditional passport, with the exception that applicants aged 16 or over will be fingerprinted and must provide their signature (4 May 2012). Similarly, *People's Daily Online* writes that

the conditions, time limit, and charge for applying for the ordinary e-passport are [the] same as those of the past [but in the course of applying] the procedures of collecting the applicant's finger prints and the applicant signing [his or her] name on site are added. (17 May 2012)

*China Daily*, an English-language news publication in China founded in 1981 (*China Daily* n.d.), notes that "the cost for the passport application will remain 200 yuan [about C\$33 (XE 2 May 2012)]" (9 May 2012).

### 3. Features of Biometric Passports

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a UN agency that was created to "promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world" (ICAO n.d.), states that "biometric passports issued [in] May 2012 have a digital chip storing personal details, facial image and fingerprints" (2012, 19). An article published on the English-language page of China News Service, "a state-level news agency sponsored and established by Chinese journalists and renowned overseas China experts on October 1, 1952" (China News Service n.d.), quotes a "media officer from the Beijing Exit-Entry Administration" as saying that "[t]he biggest difference to the old [passport] is that there's an electronic chip, which will contain information like fingerprints, photographs and the signature, embedded in the back cover" (*China News Service* 9 May 2012). The official web portal of the Chinese Government reports, citing a statement published on the website of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, that "[t]he new passports have the same appearance as traditional ones, but also feature an inserted electronic chip that records the holder's name, date of birth, photo and fingerprints" (16 May 2012).

Keesing Reference Systems provides the following physical description of the Chinese passport:

- **Validity**

10 years, 5 years for bearers younger than 16, data page entry 'Date of expiry'

- **Booklet**

c. 125 x 88 mm ...

48 pages, pages 1, 2 and 3 not numbered

- **Laminate**

page 2, clear holographic laminate, not sewn in, does not cover the whole page

- **Photo**

integrated, repeated in smaller size on the right

- **Numbering**

passport number: 8 digits preceded by a letter

page 2, letterpress

pages 3-48, laser perforated

- **Observations**

this passport was first issued in February 2012, and contains a contactless chip in the back cover, that meets the ICAO specifications; with the help of a special lens, the passport number is visible in the second photo. (n.d.a.)

Keesing Reference Systems lists the following information as appearing on the page for bearer's details: name, first names, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, bearer's signature, gender, document number, valid until, date of issue, issuing country, authority, and place of issuing (n.d.b.).

*China News Service* reports that "the passports use advanced anti-counterfeiting technologies, such as special ink and holographic images" (9 May 2012). The Xinhua News Agency also reports that "[m]ore rigid anti-counterfeiting technologies, such as special printing ink, laser signs, holographic film and digital signatures, have been applied" (4 May 2012).

The ICAO requires that all electronically enabled Machine Readable Travel Documents be identified with a specific symbol (2008, Sec. 3). *People's Daily Online* reports that "on the lower part of the front cover [of electronic passports first issued for public affairs on 1 July 2011], the unified symbol designed by the International Civil Aviation Organization is printed. It is the unique 'identity' of the electronic passport" (5 July 2011). A copy of the ICAO-required symbol and an image of the new biometric passports are attached to this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** A representative from the Chinese Embassy in Canada could not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** China – Embassy in Canada, Embassy in the United States, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; ecoinet; Factiva; United Kingdom – Home Office; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Department of State.

### Attachments

China. 16 May 2012. Chinese Government's Official Web Portal. "China Launches Electronic Passports." <[http://www.china.org.cn/china/2012-05/16/content\\_25392418\\_2.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2012-05/16/content_25392418_2.htm)> [Accessed 2 May 2013]

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