GENERAL

application for replacement initial nonimmigrant arrival

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Introduction

When a non immigrant travels to the United States for the first time, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issues an **initial arrival record**—commonly known as the I 94. This document is essential; it establishes your legal status, the length of your authorized stay, and the basis for any future immigration filings. Unfortunately, travelers sometimes lose, damage, or discover errors on that first arrival record. In such cases, the CBP provides a dedicated process: the **application for replacement initial non immigrant arrival** Understanding how to navigate this process can save you time, money, and the frustration of dealing with an incomplete or incorrect status.

In this guide, we'll break down the purpose of the replacement application, outline when you need it, detail the documents you'll need to gather, walk through the step by step filing process, highlight common pitfalls, and answer the most frequently asked questions. Whether you're a student, tourist, business traveler, or on a temporary work visa, this comprehensive resource will equip you with the knowledge to replace your initial arrival record smoothly and confidently.

Understanding the Replacement Initial Non Immigrant Arrival Application

What Is an Initial Non Immigrant Arrival?

The **initial arrival record** is the official document issued by CBP when a non immigrant first enters the United States. It is typically printed on a laminated card and contains:

- Personal identification details (name, date of birth, passport number)
- Visa classification (e.g., F 1, B 2, H 1B)
- Date of entry and port of entry
- Authorized period of stay (the "admit until" date)
- Any restrictions or conditions attached to the visa

This record is crucial because it serves as the foundation for all subsequent immigration actions—whether you're applying for a visa extension, changing status, or simply proving your lawful presence to a future employer.

Why Do You Need a Replacement?

Several scenarios may necessitate a replacement initial arrival record:

- Lost or Stolen Card – The physical I 94 card may be misplaced, stolen, or damaged beyond legibility.
- Damaged or Destroyed Document – Water damage, fire, or other mishaps can render the original card unreadable.
- Incorrect Information – Errors in personal data or visa classification can lead to complications in future filings.
- Missing Record – In rare cases, CBP may fail to issue an initial arrival record, requiring a formal replacement.

Filing for a replacement ensures that you have an accurate, up to date document that reflects your legal status and protects you from potential immigration complications.

Eligibility and Situations That Require Replacement

Lost or Stolen I 94

If you cannot locate your I 94 card or it has been stolen, you must file for a replacement. It is advisable to report the theft to local law enforcement and CBP as soon as possible. The replacement process will involve submitting proof of the loss and a copy of your passport.

Damaged or Destroyed Arrival Record

Physical damage that makes the card unreadable—such as water stains, tears, or burn marks—requires a replacement. Even if the card is still legible but you're unsure of its authenticity, a replacement can provide peace of mind.

Incorrect Information on the Original Record

Common errors include misspelled names, wrong passport numbers, or incorrect visa categories. These inaccuracies can cause problems when you apply for extensions or change status. A replacement with corrected details is essential.

Other Exceptional Circumstances

Occasionally, travelers may discover that their initial arrival record was never issued—perhaps due to a clerical mistake at the port of entry. In such cases, you must file a replacement to establish your lawful entry.

Key Documents and Information Needed

Before you begin the replacement application, gather the following items to streamline the process:

- Passport – The original passport used for entry, including the visa stamp.
- Copy of the Lost/Destroyed I 94 – If you have any photocopies or screenshots, bring them.
- Proof of Entry – Flight itinerary, boarding passes, or a letter from the airline confirming your arrival.
- Police Report (if stolen) – A copy of the police report confirming the theft.
- Photographs – Two recent passport size photos, if required by CBP.
- Fee Payment Receipt – Proof of payment for the replacement fee.
- Form I 94A – The official replacement application form (available online).

Step by Step Guide to Completing the Application

Gathering Your Personal Information

Begin by compiling all personal data that will appear on the new arrival record. This includes:

- Full legal name as it appears on your passport
- Date of birth
- Passport number and country of issuance
- Visa classification and number
- Date and port of entry
- Intended period of stay

Filling the Form Online or Paper

CBP offers two primary methods to submit the replacement application:

1. Online Filing – Visit the official CBP website and navigate to the "I 94 Replacement" portal. Online filing is faster and allows you to upload supporting documents digitally.
2. Paper Filing – If you prefer a hard copy approach, download Form I 94A from the CBP website, fill it out

manually, and mail it to the designated address.

Regardless of the method, ensure that all fields are completed accurately and legibly. Double check that your passport number, visa type, and entry date match the original documents.

Submitting Supporting Documents

Attach the following to your application:

- Photocopy of the original passport's biographic page
- Copy of the lost or damaged I 94 card (if available)
- Police report (for stolen cards)
- Proof of travel (flight itinerary or boarding passes)
- Any additional documentation that supports the correctness of the data (e.g., a letter from your university confirming your status)

All documents should be in English or accompanied by a certified English translation.

Paying the Fee

CBP charges a modest fee for the replacement of an initial arrival record. As of the latest update, the fee is $5.00. Payment can be made via:

- Online credit/debit card (when filing electronically)
- Check or money order (when mailing a paper application)
- Cash (if you're visiting a CBP port of entry in person)

Retain the receipt; it will serve as proof of payment and may be requested by CBP.

Tracking Your Application

After submission, CBP assigns a case number. If you filed online, you can log back into the portal to check status updates. For paper applications, you can call the CBP Customer Service Center or send an email to the address provided on the application. Typical processing times range from 5 to 10 business days, but delays can occur during peak travel periods.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Submitting Incomplete Information – Missing fields or incorrect data can lead to rejection. Always double check your entries.
- Failing to Provide Supporting Documents – Without proof of loss, theft, or correct data, CBP may deny the request.
- Using the Wrong Form – Ensure you are using Form I 94A for replacement, not the standard I 94 application.
- Ignoring the Fee – Applications without payment are automatically rejected. Keep your receipt handy.
- Submitting in a Foreign Language – Non English documents must be accompanied by certified translations.

Tips for a Smooth Process

1. Act Quickly – The sooner you file after losing or discovering an error, the faster you can correct your status.
2. Keep Copies – Maintain copies of all submitted documents and correspondence for your records.
3. Use the Online Portal – Electronic filing is typically faster and allows you to upload documents directly.
4. Check the CBP FAQ – The CBP website contains up to date instructions and troubleshooting tips.
5. Stay Informed About Fees – Fees can change; verify the current amount before submitting.

Frequently Asked Questions

A: File a replacement to establish your lawful entry. Provide proof of travel and any other documentation that confirms your arrival.

A: Typically 5–10 business days after submission, but processing times can vary.

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