

# ALERTS

## Immigration Update

### NEW ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION ("ESTA")

Immigration Practice Team

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization ("ESTA") applies to any person planning to enter the U.S. without a visa for up to 90 days as a visitor for business or pleasure. The ESTA requires travelers from Visa Waiver Program Countries to log on to the ESTA web page and complete an application prior to any travel to the U.S. on or after January 12, 2009.

The application requests information regarding previous travels, criminal history, and other security-related issues. Those who are denied ESTA authorization will be required to appear at a U.S. Embassy abroad and apply for a visa in order to travel to the U.S. on or after January 12, 2009. Those who receive ESTA authorization must print out the approval page and show it to the airline employees when boarding the plane.

We anticipate that this new program will cause visa appointment backlogs at US Consulates throughout Europe. Therefore, if you know now that you must travel to the US on or after January 12, 2009 and you do not possess a US visa valid for that trip, we highly recommend completing the ESTA application now to ensure enough time to obtain a visa if the ESTA program requires you to do so.

Should you have questions on this new ESTA requirement, please call or email your *MVA Immigration Team Contact*.