

UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office Chooses 3M to Deliver Biometric Passports

The UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) announced today it has appointed 3M to develop, test and implement the UK's first biometric passport issuance system. The new system will use biometric technology to prevent multiple passports from being issued to the same person under different identities.

3M will equip 104 British Embassies, Consulates and High Commissions around the world with new passport issuance systems that can identify biometric information. One in 10 British passports are issued outside of the UK and the new web-based 3M Identity Document Issuance System will ensure that these passports are as secure as those issued in the UK by the UK Passport Office.

The development of the new secure passports follows standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) which recommends facial recognition as the primary biometric for travel documents.

British passports issued outside the UK beginning January 2006 will include facial recognition and individual demographic data in a microchip. Structural dimensions of facial features will be taken from passport photographs and converted into unique digital data on the chip. The chip also will include the individual's demographic data including name, age and birthplace.

"The FCO's pioneering work to ensure that multiple travel documents are not issued to the same person will be supported by 3M delivering a tailored technology solution. This is just the beginning. To complete the journey, all UK issued passports must become biometric," said David Cook, general manager, 3M Safety and Security Division.

"Secure identity documentation is increasingly important given today's focus on improving border controls," said Paul Siezland, director of Consular Services, FCO. "3M has a detailed understanding of biometric technology and a track record in secure document issuance spanning 15 years, including an earlier project for the FCO to issue machine readable passports throughout British Embassies, Consulates and High Commissions."

For more than 30 years, 3M has provided premier security products that track, identify, authenticate and secure. Drawing on its broad technology base and expertise, 3M creates solutions for a wide array of security needs, such as issuance and authentication of travel documents and personal identification cards; brand and asset protection solutions to fight tampering and counterfeiting; and file and library security, tracking and workflow management solutions.

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