

# Winter Holiday Border Crossing 2025: What's Different This Year

What's changed for winter holiday border crossings in 2025

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December and January border crossings face unique challenges combining peak travel volume with winter weather complications and 2025 regulatory changes.

## 2025 Regulatory Updates Affecting Holiday Travel

**Device searches reached record levels in 2025. Holiday travel doesn't reduce scrutiny. Expect:**

- Potential device inspection regardless of crossing frequency
- Questions about social media accounts
- Extended screening if officers find concerning content
- Power on all devices for inspection if requested
- Provide passwords if requested for secondary screening
- Explain ownership of multiple devices
- Justify business equipment if questioned

**Pet import requirements changed significantly. New CDC rules effective since July 2025 require:**

- All dogs 6+ months old
- Microchip verification
- CDC Dog Import Form completion
- Foreign-vaccinated dogs from high-risk countries cannot enter at land borders

Documentation requirements remain strict despite holidays. REAL ID compliance becomes mandatory soon. Enhanced Driver's Licenses work for land crossings, standard driver's licenses do not.

## Peak Travel Periods

**Busiest crossing times:**

- December 20-23 (pre-Christmas exodus)
- December 26-28 (return travel begins)
- December 30-January 1 (New Year's travel)
- January 2-5 (final return wave)

**Quietest crossing times:**

- Christmas Eve morning
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Day before noon

## Winter Weather Complications

Northern crossings face serious weather challenges December through February.

### Potential issues:

- Highway closures due to storms
- Reduced visibility affecting operations
- Extreme cold causing mechanical failures during waits
- Ice creating dangerous conditions in crossing areas
- Limited staffing during severe weather

### Weather preparation requirements:

- Monitor forecasts from multiple sources
- Have alternate routes planned
- Pack winter emergency supplies (blankets, water, flashlight, first aid, food)
- Ensure vehicle winterized
- Build significant time buffers
- Consider postponing if severe weather predicted

## Gift Transportation

Holiday gift transportation creates specific challenges.

### All gifts must be declared:

- Total value of all items combined
- Individual high-value items
- Items for others count toward your exemption

### Wrapped gifts may require unwrapping:

- Officers can require inspection
- Don't wrap gifts before crossing
- Use gift bags for easy inspection
- Rewrap at destination

### Value thresholds and duty:

- Personal exemptions vary by citizenship and absence length
- Gifts over exemption face duty charges
- Commercial quantities trigger different rules
- Receipts help establish value

## Family Group Coordination

Holiday travel often involves extended families creating coordination challenges.

### Document requirements:

- Each person needs proper documentation
- Children require age-appropriate documents
- Consent letters for minors traveling without all parents
- Medical information for family members with conditions

### Vehicle capacity considerations:

- Don't overload vehicles
- Properly secure all cargo
- Ensure all passengers have seatbelts
- Keep necessary items accessible

## Extended Absence Implications

Longer holiday trips affect documentation and declarations.

### Extended absences require:

- More detailed explanation of activities
- Documentation of accommodations
- Potentially more thorough inspection
- Careful declaration of all purchases abroad

## Final Recommendations

### Successful winter holiday crossings require:

- Early preparation (weeks, not days)
- Weather monitoring and flexibility
- Complete, accurate declarations
- Patience for enhanced processing
- Realistic timeline expectations
- Backup plans for delays

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