

Replacing a Green Card

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There are several instances when a permanent resident may need to apply for a replacement green card such as when the card was lost or stolen, when it was never received, when it contains wrong information or when one is issued an old edition green card.

1. When the Green Card was Never Received.

If after 90 days since your adjustment of your status you have not received your green card, you may start inquiring at the nearest INS office to find out what happened to it. The INS doesn't make the cards. Instead they send the application to a card processing facility which processes, produces and mails the cards to new permanent residents. To track down the green card, file form G-731, and send it directly to the Immigration Card Facility. Be sure to fill in the Alien registration number which is stamped in the passport at the time of adjustment. This information is crucial to tracking down the status of card processing. You must also provide your full name, port of entry or INS office where adjustment took place, date of entry or adjustment, date of birth, and new address if applicable. If the card cannot be traced, a new application will have to be made.

2. When the Green Card is Lost, Stolen or Destroyed

If the green card is lost, stolen or simply worn out from age, a new one must be obtained. The application could be filed at the local INS office that has jurisdiction over the alien's place of residence.

3. When Information on Green Card Must be Changed

If you married and have a change of name, or if after receiving your card you notice some wrong information such as misspelled name, you must apply for a new card at the local INS office.

4. When a Permanent Resident Turns 14 Years Old

A green card holder, who turns 14, must apply for a new card within 30 days of his or her 14th birthday. If you forgot or neglected to make this application, do so after reading this article. The application will be accepted by the INS though it is late. Often this failure is discovered when the adult permanent resident reenters the country with a green card that contains his picture when he was a little boy.

5. When the Alien has an Old Edition of the Card.

Long time residents who were issued the old edition of the card have until March 20, 1995 to apply for a new one. This latest version of the card contains machine readable information and is more counterfeit-resistant. It also carries a ten-year expiration date, something which the earlier version did not have. After ten years, the cardholder will have to apply for a new one. People who failed to apply for a replacement before March 20, 1995 will not lose their permanent resident status, but they will no longer have evidence of their status. This evidence is needed when you travel out of the country, when you apply for a job, when you apply for government benefit programs, and when you file for naturalization or sponsor relatives for immigration.

A permanent resident may also apply for a replacement for any other reason not stated above such as when the card no longer contains a photograph that resembles the bearer.