PROTECTING YOUR DATA AT THE U.S. BORDER

A GUIDE FROM THE ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION

Crossing the U.S. border? Border agents may demand your digital data. Here are some things to keep in mind.

Consider your individual risk assessment factors. Your immigration status, travel history, the sensitivity of your data, and other factors may influence your choices.

BEFORE YOUR TRIP:

- **Reduce the data you carry.** Consider using temporary devices, deleting data from your regular devices, or shifting data to the cloud.
- **Encrypt.** Use strong full-disk encryption, not just weak screen-lock passwords.
- **Passwords.** Use software to make them long, unpredictable, and memorable.
- **Backup.** In case agents seize your devices, backup your data.
- **Power down.** Do it before arriving at the border, to block high-tech attacks.
- **Fingerprint locks.** They are weaker than passwords, so don't rely on them.
- **Apps and browsers.** Agents use them to get from devices to cloud content. Consider logging out, removing saved login credentials, and uninstalling.
- **But be aware:** Unusual precautions may make border agents suspicious.

AT THE BORDER:

What if border agents instruct you to unlock your devices, provide your passwords, or disclose your social media information? There is no "right" answer.

- **Be safe.** Stay calm and respectful. Do not lie to agents, which can be a crime.
- **If you comply,** agents may scrutinize and copy your sensitive data.
- **If you refuse,** agents may seize your devices. They also may escalate the encounter, for example, by detaining you for more time.
- **If you are a U.S. citizen,** agents must let you enter the country.
- **If you are a lawful permanent resident,** agents might raise complicated questions about your continued status as a resident.
- **If you are a foreign visitor,** agents might deny you entry.

AFTER YOUR TRIP:

If you had problems:
- Contact EFF at **borders@eff.org**.
- Write down the details of what happened, including names of officers.

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