

Frequently Asked Questions: eFOIPA

■ What is the eFOIPA system?

The FBI's eFOIPA system allows for electronic receipt of Freedom of Information/Privacy Act (FOIPA) requests as well as electronic responses to those requests when possible.

■ What are the eFOIPA system's operating hours?

The eFOIPA system is conveniently available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days per year.

■ How many requests may I submit per day via the eFOIPA system?

There is no limit to the number of requests you may make per day.

■ What is the maximum attachment size that the eFOIPA system can accept?

The maximum size per attachment is 10 megabytes. The combined file size of all attachments for a single request may not exceed 30 megabytes.

■ Is the eFOIPA system mobile-friendly?

The eFOIPA system is designed to allow users to view transmitted responses and releases from the convenience of a smartphone or tablet.

■ What kinds of requests can be submitted via the eFOIPA system?

The eFOIPA system allows requests of all types, including those related to the Privacy Act (first-party), deceased individuals, policies and procedures, events, organizations, and more.

■ I need an FBI background check for immigration, travel, or employment purposes. Can I submit that request through the eFOIPA system?

No. This type of request is called an Identity History Summary Check—often referred to as a criminal background check, criminal history record, police background clearance, police/good conduct certificate, or “rap sheet.” This is a separate process from a FOIPA request and therefore cannot be handled via the eFOIPA system.

■ More information on obtaining a copy of your FBI Identity History Summary Check

■ What is required to make a request on a deceased individual?

You will be required to upload proof of death for requests for records pertaining to deceased individuals. Proof of death must come from a verifiable source (i.e., an obituary or newspaper article, death certificate, Social Security Death Indices printout, etc.). Web links are insufficient for proof of death; you must upload a copy of the actual documentation. Acceptable formats for the attachment include .pdf or .doc. An uploaded proof of death is not required for requests for records about deceased individuals who would be over 100 years of age at the time of the request; however, you must provide the individual's date of birth.

■ I am a freelance journalist. How do I request a fee waiver?

If you are a member of the media but not affiliated with an organization, please make your fee waiver request on a separate document and upload the attachment to the fee waiver section of your request.

For further information about FOIPA fees, see the FOIPA Reference Guide.

■ How will I know if my request was successfully submitted?

You will receive digital confirmation of your eFOIPA request submission directly to your e-mail account. This confirmation will include an assigned Electronic Tracking Number (ETN). Please note: The ETN is different than the FOIPA request number assigned to your request and cannot be used to check the status of your request online.

■ Why didn't my confirmation e-mail contain my FOIPA request number?

Requests are processed in the order that they are received. Once opened, your eFOIPA request will be assigned a FOIPA request number and correspondence containing that number will be sent to you. You may then use the FOIPA request number to check the status of your request online.

■ How do I check the status of my request?

You may check the status of your request online 24/7 at vault.fbi.gov by clicking on the “Check Status of Your FOIPA Request” link on the right side of the page. Statuses are updated once weekly.

■ How will I receive the information requested?

The eFOIPA system allows all types of Freedom of Information/Privacy Act (FOIPA) requests, to include requests on first parties (Privacy Act requests), deceased individuals, policies and procedures, events, organizations, and any other topic. The majority of FOIA and Privacy Act responses will be electronically transmitted; however, not all responses can be transmitted electronically. The address on file will be used if the response cannot be completed electronically.

■ How long will it take to process my request?

Requests are processed in the order in which they are received through our multi-track processing system. The FBI receives a voluminous amount of requests on a daily basis. Requests are divided based on size, and 90 percent of incoming requests fall in the small or medium track. (Requests that encompass a high volume of responsive records will take a longer time to process than requests that encompass a small or medium volume of responsive records.)

■ Additional Questions

If you have additional questions or concerns prior to submitting your Freedom of Information Act or Privacy Act (FOIPA) request to the FBI, please visit justice.gov/oip/doj-foia-regulations.

■ Additional information about the Freedom of Information/Privacy Act

Should you have questions about preparing or submitting your request using this service, you may email foipaquestions@ic.fbi.gov or contact the public information officer directly at (540) 868-4997. Alternatively, you may submit your request using standard mail (FBI, Attn: FOIPA Request, 200 Constitution Drive, Winchester, VA 22602).

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