

**From:** [Vice Provost for Research](#)  
**To:** [Vice Provost for Research](#)  
**Subject:** Travel Advisory for International Scholars  
**Date:** Friday, December 11, 2020 7:37:56 AM  
**Attachments:** [Template Explanation Letter.docx](#)

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To: Caltech faculty and international scholars  
From: Kaushik Bhattacharya  
Date: 11 December 2020  
Subject: Travel Advisory for International Scholars

It has come to the attention of the Institute that international scholars traveling abroad from the United States have been subject to search at U.S. borders and airports while exiting the country by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). In some instances, we understand that electronic devices have been confiscated so that CBP can conduct a forensic search of their contents. We understand that these searches have been motivated by the concerns over theft of intellectual property and other national security concerns.

All members of the Caltech community should be aware that CBP agents have broad authority to search and seize your possessions, including electronic devices, when anyone enters or departs the country. Indeed, CBP does not need a warrant to conduct searches at the border.

If you need to travel internationally, ensure that your devices do not contain any export controlled information or restricted government information. Further, if possible, avoid carrying proprietary data or other information that may be regarded as sensitive such as unpublished data. If this is not possible and you have to travel with proprietary (but not restricted) information, it is recommended that you take measures that ensure preservation of the information and minimize the risk of raising suspicion:

- Ensure that all data on your electronic devices is securely backed up;
- Caltech faculty may provide a letter prepared on Caltech letterhead with an inventory of presentations, research data and other information that they have authorized the person to carry on their electronic devices or any other media. (A template letter is provided);
- If applicable, provide a link to a platform where the data is publicly available or cite the export license authority. For additional guidance on the latter, please contact Adilia F. Koch, Export Compliance Office before traveling with technical data;
- Consult with the resources listed below.

If your device is seized, make sure you get a receipt, which should include information about your device and contact information allowing you to follow up. If Customs and Border Protection or law enforcement has seized or confiscated your device, please contact the Office of General Counsel who will engage the appropriate campus personnel to assist you.

Contacts and resources:

Office of General Counsel

<https://www.ogc.caltech.edu/>

Export Compliance Office

<http://researchadministration.caltech.edu/export>

Vice Provost for Research

<https://provost.caltech.edu/>

Caltech advisories:

<https://international.caltech.edu/travel-new/arrival-us/inspection-upon-entering-united-states>

<https://international.caltech.edu/travel-new/arrival-us/travel-advice>

<http://researchadministration.caltech.edu/export/travel>

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Additional information:

What Travelers Should Know About New Restrictions on Devices

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/technology/personaltech/what-travelers-should-know-about-new-restrictions-on-devices.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Crossing the Border? Here's How to Safeguard Your Data From Searches

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/technology/personaltech/crossing-the-border-heres-how-to-safeguard-your-data-from-searches.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Office of the Director of National Intelligence

<https://www.dni.gov/index.php/ncsc-how-we-work/ncsc-know-the-risk-raise-your-shield/ncsc-travel-tips>