

radio frequency identification and B.C.'s enhanced driver's licence program

Radio frequency identification (RFID) is a wireless technology that stores and retrieves data remotely. RFID technology is used in the enhanced driver's licences (EDL) and enhanced identification cards (EIC) to allow them to be used at the U.S. border. The components of an RFID system are

- an RFID tag with a microchip and antenna,
- a reader with an antenna, and
- a database of information.

B.C.'s enhanced driver's licence and RFID

An RFID tag is embedded in B.C.'s enhanced driver's licences and enhanced identification cards. This is required by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection so the enhanced cards can be read at the border and to facilitate rapid identification checks by customs officers.

The type of RFID tag in the EDL/EIC cards is a passive vicinity tag. Passive tags have no power source. They cannot broadcast information on their own. They draw power from the RFID reader's antenna, which enables the RFID tag to transmit information on the chip to the reader. The reader then converts the radio waves from the tag into digital information that is passed on to a computer.

Information on the RFID tag

The only information on the RFID tag in your EDL/EIC is a unique identifier number and a tag ID number. These are not your driver's licence number and there is no other information on the RFID chip.

As you approach the customs booth, RFID readers located at select U.S. border crossings will scan the unique identifier number in the RFID chip, to connect to the secure EDL database. The database is located in Canada and maintained by the Canada Border Services Agency. Your information appears on the customs officer's screen and is used to verify your identity, confirm the card is still valid and that you are the rightful cardholder.



The information in this publication is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to provide legal or professional advice. We have used plain language to summarize some of the terms of the policy that is the topic of this publication or help readers understand some of the laws affecting the topic of this publication at the date it was written. You should follow the more detailed wording and requirements of current applicable statutes and regulations or policy, even if they contradict the wording and requirements set out in this publication.

MV2666 (062009)

How secure is RFID?

Any data transmitted for EDL/EIC is protected by data encryption, secure networks and firewalls. For added security you'll receive a protective sleeve with your EDL/EIC to protect the RFID chip from being read when you're not using your card to cross the border.

Does the RFID chip make crossing the border faster?

The RFID chip will facilitate faster identification checks at the border as your information is already on the customs officer's screen when you arrive at the booth. Currently there are no designated EDL/EIC lanes at the U.S. borders.

What if there are no RFID readers at the border?

When you present your EDL to the U.S. customs officer at the booth, they'll scan your EDL. A number contained in the machine readable zone on the back of your card, called the optical character recognition unique identifier number, is used to call up the same limited personal information from the same secure database in Canada.

Passports and RFID

Canada does not currently embed RFID chips in Canadian passports. However, a number of countries are using RFID technology including the U.S. (since 2006), the United Kingdom, Australia, Norway, Ireland, Japan, Germany and others.

Privacy concerns?

Review the EDL Privacy and Information Sharing fact sheet on icbc.com.

building trust. driving confidence.