

## AGENCY BURDEN REDUCTION INITIATIVES

CASE  
STUDY

## The Commitment: A 20 Million Hour Burden Reduction Target (Department of Homeland Security)

### Setting — and Meeting — a Department-wide Burden Target

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) imposed 203 million hours of paperwork burden on the public in 2021.<sup>52</sup> Whether it is moving through airport security, transporting goods through our ports, or applying for citizenship, DHS interacts with the public in a range of circumstances. All of these interactions and processes often require significant paperwork and time. DHS has committed to improving customer experience by reducing this burden on the public. To mobilize the entire agency behind this goal and begin to move to a customer-centric culture, DHS launched and completed a department wide 20-million-hour burden reduction initiative.<sup>53</sup> Every subagency within DHS committed to finding ways to reduce their paperwork burdens by 10%, whether through simplified forms, new online services, or updated policies. By doing so, DHS subagencies have not only improved the experience of people dealing with the agency, but also reduced administrative burden and time taxes.

As of June 1, 2023, DHS has reduced over 21 million burden hours on the public. For example, the Transportation Security Agency introduced online renewals in the Transportation Worker Identification Credential program, eliminating the need for in-person visits for workers who need access to maritime facilities and vessels. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) redesigned the registration process for disaster survivors to apply for aid to eliminate unnecessary questions and reduce complexity, which in turn will dramatically reduce burden on survivors. FEMA also eliminated 2.8 million burden hours by replacing legacy software systems and creating “type-ahead” features in the National Fire Incident Reporting System for local fire departments filing incident reports.<sup>54</sup>

52. As measured by the Information Collection Budget for Fiscal Year 2021: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2018-2021-ICB.pdf>.

53. Department of Homeland Security Memorandum for Component and Office Heads, *Paperwork Reduction Act Burden Reduction Initiative*: [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Burden\\_Reduction\\_Initiative\\_Memo\\_Final%20PDF%20CIO%20signed.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Burden_Reduction_Initiative_Memo_Final%20PDF%20CIO%20signed.pdf).

54. Department of Homeland Security. 2023. “DHS Improves Customer Experience by Simplifying Services Used by the Public.” <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/05/30/dhs-improves-customer-experience-simplifying-services-used-public>.

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**Anticipating and Addressing Potential Burdens**

In addition to these examples, DHS is also anticipating and addressing potential burdens that members of the public might face, as exemplified by rulemaking around mobile drivers licenses. At least eight states have started issuing mobile drivers licenses — also called digital drivers licenses (or “mDLs”) — to their residents, and at least three additional states are piloting mDLs. These mDLs reside on people’s mobile devices, including smartphones and smartwatches, and provide potential benefits of increased convenience, security, and privacy. mDLs are growing in popularity: one state (Louisiana) reported that over a million residents may already be using its mDLs, and at least 17 other states are exploring mDLs. Beginning in May 2025, a Federal agency cannot accept any state-issued driver’s license or identification card, including mDLs, for official purposes unless it complies with the REAL ID Act of 2005.

The fast rise of state-issued mDLs thus presented potential challenges for the Federal government. mDL technology is new and evolving, and both states and the general public have been eager to adopt mDLs. Current DHS regulations, however, do not permit states to issue REAL ID-compliant mDLs. In the absence of updated Federal regulations, individual states may waste time and resources choosing mDL safeguards that fail to meet REAL ID security requirements. Without timely government guidance, this could result in undue burden and confusion for individuals being denied use of mDLs when interacting with Federal agencies — such as at Transportation Security Administration airport security checkpoints. Responding to this potential burden, DHS is developing a proposed regulation that would enable DHS to issue to states a temporary waiver of certain REAL ID regulatory requirements that would allow Federal agencies to accept state-issued mDLs that meet certain security and data integrity requirements.