

## Documents Lost Or Damaged

Documents lost or damaged by Identity and Passport Service (IPS) staff

Establishing how the document was lost or damaged

Process

UK documents

Foreign documents

What to do when an applicant reports they have not received their documents back

### Documents lost or damaged by Identity and Passport Service (IPS) Staff

In the past IPS has used one of the following two methods in order to replace document lost or damaged by staff:

- Ask the customer to obtain a replacement document and then forward receipt/cost to IPS for reimbursement; or
- IPS ask the issuing authority directly (or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) if it is a foreign document) for a replacement.

Either of the two methods above can work well but it has been established that asking the customer to obtain a replacement (**except naturalisation and registration certificates**) and reimbursing them afterwards is cheaper and quicker for both the customer and IPS. It also saves times as there would be no need for examiners/customer service to chase the issuing authority for a replacement.

Therefore, examiners should encourage customers to obtain replacements for both UK and foreign documents. We should order documents **only** where the customer insists that he/she wants IPS to obtain the replacement.

### Establishing how the document was lost or damaged

When dealing with lost or damaged documents, examiners need to establish first the circumstances of the loss or damage before taking steps to get a replacement.

If a document has been lost or damaged en route to IPS, we will not accept liability for this. Royal Mail or the delivery company used by the customer will be responsible for this. Advise the customer to contact Royal Mail or the delivery company.

If a document has been lost or damaged en route from our high street partners (Post Office Ltd), then the partner will be liable for the cost of any replacement documents if it has been established that the application was not sent into IPS by Special Delivery or there is evidence that the Special Delivery package has not been received. IPS may obtain replacement documents in such circumstances; however, any such claim should be referred to the partner concerned for reimbursement.

If an application is received in the examining section with supporting documents either missing or damaged, IPS will be responsible for dealing with the lost or damaged document, and the case on completion should be referred to the Regional Contract Manager for further action

If a document has been lost or damaged as a result of being returned by secure delivery via DX Secure, IPS will still be liable but will pursue Secure Mail Services (SMS) for reimbursement.

If a document has been lost or damaged as a result of being returned to the customer by 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> class post, IPS will not accept liability for this. Customers are fully aware that they have the option to pay for their document to be returned to them by secure delivery.

If, however, the document has been lost or damaged in error by an examiner, then IPS will be responsible and actions should be taken to inform the customer and advise him/her on how to obtain a replacement. Any claims would normally be expected to be received within 12 months of a passport application being processed by IPS.

## Process

If you have established that the document was lost/damaged by IPS, follow the procedure below depending on whether or not the document is a UK or a foreign document.

## UK documents

Contact the customer immediately and inform him/her of the loss or damage and apologise on IPS' behalf.

If it is a **naturalisation or registration certificate**, then go to point 4.5 of this document and follow the process through. This is because IPS has arrangements with the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) to replace these documents at no cost. Also, it is difficult for members of the public to get replacements from UKBA for naturalisation and registration certificates.

For all other documents, suggest to the customer that it may be quicker if he/she obtain the replacement document and then forward receipt to IPS for reimbursement at a reasonable cost.

Customers should be advised to request replacement birth, death, adoption and marriage certificates from their local Registrar or from the General Register Office (GRO) – details below. The cost will be refunded to the customer and is nominal when documents are obtained as described, however documents can be requested through third parties who advertise extensively and charge much more for the service, so it is important that staff advise applicants to request documents in this manner.

Certificate General PO Southport PR8 2JD	Services Register Box	Section Office 2
--	-----------------------------	------------------------

[www.direct.gov.uk/gro](http://www.direct.gov.uk/gro)

The New Edinburgh EH1 3YT (Scotland)	Register Register	General House
---	----------------------	------------------

[www.direct.gov.uk/gro](http://www.direct.gov.uk/gro)

The Oxford 49/55 Belfast BT1 4AH (N Ireland)	Register Chichester	General House Street
--	------------------------	----------------------------

[www.direct.gov.uk/gro](http://www.direct.gov.uk/gro)

If the customer refuses, explain to them that it may take sometime to get a replacement document as we dependent on the good will of the issuing authority.

If the customer insists that IPS should replace his/her document, forward the query to the **Regional Customer Service Team** (see below) for action. The customer service team should then contact the relevant authority to make the necessary arrangements on behalf of the customer for a replacement document.

From 01/01/2009 The General Registrars Office (GRO) will no longer accept faxed, emailed or photocopied applications for certificates. They will only accept postal applications on new style application forms which can be captured by Intelligent Character Recognition software. The new forms can be obtained by regional customer service departments, for use in obtaining

copies of lost documents as per policy, or for use in other customer services cases as appropriate.

Check the online policy manual for addresses of UK local registries and GRO in the UK.

You should note that any additional requests for compensation should be dealt with as per Compensation and Complaints.

The paperwork relating to the lost document should be retained pending receipt of the document.

You should make a case or passport note (depending on whether or not a passport has been issued) at every stage of the process including when the replacement is received and when it is despatched to the customer.

## Foreign documents

Where a foreign document has been lost or damaged by IPS, contact the customer immediately and inform him/her of the loss or damage and apologise on IPS' behalf.

Suggest to the customer that it may be quicker if he/she obtain the replacement document and then forward receipt to IPS for reimbursement at a reasonable cost. Also, inform the customer that **we will not reimburse the cost of travel** to the country concerned for purpose of replacing the document.

If the customer agrees to get the replacement but asks for payment to be made upfront (before he/she obtains the document), the customer service section should consider it.

If the customer refuses, explain to them that it may take sometime to get a replacement document as we are dependent on the good will of the post abroad and their local administrative offices. Inform the customer also that there are no guarantees that the document will be obtained by the FCO or how long the process will take.

If the customer insists that IPS should replace his/her document, forward the query to the **Regional Customer Service Team** for action. Then the Regional Customer Service Section should ask the customer first to provide a letter addressed to the FCO authorising (letter of authority) IPS to get the replacement on his/her behalf. You should note that without a letter of authority from the customer, FCO would not be able to proceed with the search request.

Any additional requests for compensation should be dealt with as per Compensation and Complaints.

The paperwork relating to the lost document should be retained in Customer Service Section pending receipt of the document. The request should be reviewed every 3 months.

You should make a case or passport note (depending on whether or not a passport has been issued) at every stage of the process including when the replacement is received and when it is despatched to the customer.

Questions relating to this policy should be routed via your line manager to the local Policy Network Group (PNG) Officer.

### **What to do when an applicant reports that they have not received their documents back**

Customer enquiries about non-receipt of their documentation will normally be received by post, through a Telephone Enquiries Bureau (TEB), forwarded via Teleperformance (TP) or as feedback via e-mail from the IPS website. All these enquiries should be forwarded to the Regional Customer Service Team for action.

The Customer Service Team will be in a position to monitor all aspects of the customers concerns from determining whether non-receipt of the documents is the result of an IPS examiner error, or an item mis-posted by a DX courier, the document has been lost or damaged internally by IPS or the document has been lost following despatch via Royal Mail.

If it is established that SMS are at fault for the non-receipt of the document then the Customer Service Team will be responsible for forwarding the case to the SMS team to conduct an investigation to establish if the package has been mis-posted. On completion of this investigation, the case will be referred back to the Customer Service Team and if necessary agreed with the customer how the documents will be replaced as outlined above. All actions must be case noted.

### **Documents damaged and returned by SMS**

When documents are returned to IPS by SMS due to internal damage these documents should be replaced by the Customer Service Team, and a file created and sent to SMS with a copy of the costs to ensure that IPS is provided with a credit note for the requisite amount.

### **Royal Mail Losses**

Claims for replacement documents due to the loss being with Royal Mail should be dealt with by Customer Service Teams and either the appropriate letter sent explaining the reasons why IPS will not replace the documents, as outlined in the Complaints & Compensation Policy, or if it is an examiner error the documents should be replaced, as outlined above. All actions must be case noted.