



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
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**Fact Sheet**

**Steps Taken to Ensure New Security Requirements  
Preserve and Respect the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities**

The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) and the Department of Transportation's implementing rules prohibit discriminatory treatment of persons with disabilities in air transportation. Since the terrorist hijackings and tragic events of September 11, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) have issued directives to strengthen security measures at airline checkpoints and passenger screening locations. In securing our national air transportation system, where much of FAA's and TSA's efforts have been directed to date, steps were also taken to ensure that the new security procedures preserve and respect the civil rights of passengers with disabilities. This Fact Sheet provides information about the accessibility requirements in air travel in light of strengthened security measures by providing a few examples of the types of accommodations and services that must be provided to passengers with disabilities. The examples listed below are not all-inclusive and are simply meant to provide answers to frequently asked questions since September 11 concerning the air travel of people with disabilities. We hope this information is helpful to you.

**Check-in**

- Air carriers must provide enplaning and deplaning assistance requested by passengers with disabilities, including assistance beyond the screener checkpoints, but have discretion in how this assistance is provided. Individuals who wish to assist passengers with disabilities beyond the screener checkpoint may be required to present themselves at the airlines' check-in desk and receive a "pass" allowing them to go through the screener checkpoint without a ticket.

**Screener checkpoints**

- Air carriers must provide enplaning and deplaning assistance requested by passengers with disabilities, including assistance beyond the screener checkpoints, but have discretion in how this assistance is provided. Individuals who wish to assist passengers with disabilities beyond the screener checkpoint may be required to present themselves at the airlines' check-in desk and receive a "pass" allowing them to go through the screener checkpoint without a ticket.
- Ticketed passengers with their own oxygen for use on the ground are allowed beyond the screener checkpoints with their oxygen canisters once the canisters have been thoroughly inspected. If there is a request for oxygen at the gate for a qualified passenger with a disability, commercial oxygen providers are allowed beyond the screener checkpoints with oxygen canisters once the canisters have been thoroughly inspected. Commercial oxygen providers may be required to present themselves at the airlines' check-in desk to obtain "passes" allowing them to go through the screener checkpoint without tickets.
- The limit of one carry-on bag and one personal bag (e.g., purse or briefcase) for each traveler does not apply to medical supplies and/or assistive devices (including service animals and their equipment). Passengers with disabilities generally may carry medical equipment, medications, and assistive devices on board the aircraft.
- All persons allowed beyond the screener checkpoints may be searched. This usually will be done through the use of a hand-held metal detector, when possible. Passengers may also be patted down during security screenings, and this is even more likely if the passenger uses a wheelchair and is unable to stand up. Private screenings remain an option for persons in wheelchairs.
- Passenger flow through the screener checkpoints should be controlled to allow a passenger to maintain visual contact with his/her personal property while he/she is being screened.
- Service animals, once inspected to ensure prohibited items are not concealed, are permitted on board an

aircraft. Any equipment (including, but not limited to, harness, backpack, leash or collar) that is carried on the animal will be manually inspected. If necessary, remind the security screeners that the service animal's belongings should not be removed during the manual inspection.

- Assistive devices such as walking canes, once inspected to ensure prohibited items are not concealed, are permitted in the passenger cabin. Assistive devices such as augmentative communication devices and Braille note takers will go through the same sort of security screening process as that used for personal computers. However, passengers that have special equipment that cannot go through the x-ray machine should notify the screeners and request a physical/visual inspection of the equipment. A slate and stylus are permitted on board the aircraft after inspection; however, it may be necessary to advise the security screener of the purpose of the slate and stylus and that it facilitates the passenger's communications.
- Syringes are permitted on board an aircraft once it is determined that the person has a documented medical need for the syringe. To show a documented medical need, a passenger must have in his or her possession medication that requires the use of a needle or syringe. The medication must have a professionally printed label identifying the medication or a manufacturer's name or a pharmaceutical label.
- Personal wheelchairs and battery-powered scooters may still be used to reach departure gates after they are inspected to ensure that they do not present a security risk. Any backpack, sidepack or other item that is carried on or under the wheelchair should be placed on the x-ray belt for inspection.
- Personal wheelchairs that are folding, collapsible, or breakdown will still be allowed to be stowed on board an aircraft, i.e. in the passenger cabin of aircraft that have closets or other facilities capable of such stowage, except where this practice would be inconsistent with DOT regulations governing carry-on items and/or the transportation of hazardous materials.
- Air carriers must return wheelchairs and other assistive devices to passengers with disabilities as close as possible to the door of the aircraft upon request. Passengers with disabilities can assist by checking-in their assistive devices and/or wheelchairs at the gate rather than at the ticket counter. If an assistive device or wheelchair is checked-in at the gate, it would have already cleared security and can be brought directly to the aircraft. If an assistive device or wheelchair is checked-in at the ticket counter, it would need to be screened before it can be brought to the passenger at the arrival gate.
- Air carriers must ensure that qualified individuals with a disability, including those with vision or hearing disabilities, have timely access to information (such as new security measures) that the carriers provide to other passengers. For example, on flights to Reagan Washington National Airport, persons are verbally warned to use the restrooms more than half an hour before arrival since after that point in time passengers are required to remain in their seats. This can be accomplished through use of carrier personnel or alternative formats, such as visual messaging.

## **How to file a complaint**

Members of the public who feel they have been the subject of discriminatory actions or treatment by air carriers may file a complaint by sending an email, a letter, or a completed complaint form to the Aviation Consumer Protection Division (ACPD). ACPD's e?mail address is [airconsumer@ost.dot.gov](mailto:airconsumer@ost.dot.gov) and its mailing address is: Aviation Consumer Protection Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, Room 4107, C-75, Washington, DC 20590. Complaint forms that consumers may download and/or print are available at <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/problems.htm>.

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