

IATA Creates Standard Mobile-Phone Checkin Code

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The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced a global standard that enables airline members to offer consistent mobile phone checkin and boarding pass options. A handful of carriers already have deployed such checkin procedures, but IATA said various standards that apply in different regions have precluded a global solution.

'Passengers want the convenience of self-service options in a paperless environment. This standard is an important step in getting rid of paper that bogs down processes and drives up costs,' IATA director general and CEO Giovanni Bisignani said in a statement.

IATA said the standards would allow carriers to send bar codes directly to mobile phones or other handheld devices, which passengers can in turn present at checkin. 'Passengers simply register their mobile number with their airline at the time of booking to receive a text message with a 2D bar code, or instructions to download it,' IATA explained. 'The bar code becomes the passenger's boarding pass and it is read directly from the screen of the mobile device, eliminating paper completely from the checkin process.'

Such carriers as Air France, Air Canada, KLM and WestJet this year have adopted mobile phone checkin. However, IATA said, 'global applications for mobile phone technology have been restricted due to different regional formats.' IATA is basing its standards on currently deployed codes used by carriers.

'The creation of a standard code is only part of the solution,' said Bisignani. 'In the next months, we will be working with our members to develop standardized processes and guidelines that facilitate global implementation.'

IATA added that the new standard supports the industry's goal of shifting boarding pass formats by 2010 from magnetic strip technology to bar codes-for both digital and paper-based tickets. IATA's shift aims to save the industry \$500 million annually.

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