

DHS Announces New Aviation Security and Traveler Screening Enhancements

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Among the key improvements, DHS is providing airlines more flexibility to allow passengers to check in remotely who have been unable to do so because they have a name similar to someone on a watch list.

The department also unveiled the Checkpoint Evolution prototype, which begins full operation at Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI).

Each airline will now be able to create a system to verify and securely store a passenger's date of birth to clear up watch list misidentifications. By voluntarily providing this limited biographical data to an airline and verifying that information once at the ticket counter, travelers that were previously inconvenienced on every trip will now be able to check-in online or at remote kiosks.

'Hassles due to misidentification and the resulting necessity to stand in line to check in at the ticket counter is consistently among the deepest - and most valid - complaints of the traveling public,' said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. 'Thousands of passengers are inconvenienced each day, and this change should provide a way to eliminate the vast majority of these situations. This is good for travelers and for security, because as we make the checkpoint environment calmer, it becomes easier to spot individuals with hostile intent.'

Additionally, DHS is providing greater clarity on the types of identification that will be accepted at checkpoints in the U.S. Beginning May 26, 2008, federal or state-issued photo ID will be accepted if it contains: name, date of birth, gender, expiration date and a tamper-resistant feature. Standardizing the list of accepted documents better aligns TSA with other DHS components and REAL ID benchmarks. More information on acceptable documents is available at www.tsa.gov.

These innovations, along with the new Checkpoint Evolution prototype, are part of a broader effort to calm the checkpoint. The BWI prototype includes Millimeter Wave technology used in random continuous use, multi-view X-ray and liquid bottle scanners. These technologies, in conjunction with changes to the checkpoint environment and processes, will be evaluated for operational efficiency over the coming months.

Transportation Security Officers and managers at BWI are the first in the country to complete a 16-hour training module designed to incorporate the latest intelligence analysis, more advanced explosives detection skills, and ways to engage with passengers to promote a calmer environment for better security. The training was developed by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Office of Intelligence, Bomb Appraisal Officers, and TSA Checkpoint Evolution team.

Checkpoint Evolution is located at B Checkpoint, Southwest Terminal at BWI. The layered security elements are both modular and flexible and designed to work individually, as well as part of an integrated package.

For more information visit www.dhs.gov.

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