

Air Travel Guidance

Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities

For people with disabilities, traveling can present some obstacles however with a bit of planning, preparation, and a positive attitude, many of the challenges associated with travel may be prevented or reduced. Recreational and competitive sport for youth and adults with disabilities often requires travel including air travel due to limited local competition opportunities. The following information, taken from federal agency resources, is organized to provide new and frequent travelers with an easy reference guide to air travel.

Screening & Security

On January 30, 2012, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced the launch of TSA Cares today, a new helpline number designed to assist travelers with disabilities and medical conditions, prior to getting to the airport. Travelers may call TSA Cares toll free at 1-855-787-2227 prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint. All travelers may ask to speak to a TSA supervisor if questions about screening procedures arise while at the security checkpoint.

The hours of operation for the TSA Cares helpline are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST, excluding federal holidays. After hours, travelers can find information about traveling with disabilities and medical needs on TSA's website. All travelers can contact TSA using [Talk To TSA](#), a web-based tool that allows passengers to reach out to an airport Customer Service Manager directly, and the TSA Contact Center, 1-866-289-9673 and TSA-ContactCenter@dhs.gov, where travelers can ask questions, provide suggestions and file complaints.

The TSA also offers a disability notification card:
http://www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/disability_notification_cards.pdf

Rights of All Passengers

The Air Carrier Access Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in air travel. The Department of Transportation has a rule defining the rights of passengers and the obligations of airlines under this law. This rule applies to all flights of U.S. airlines, and to flights to or from the United States by foreign airlines. The following is a summary of the main points of the DOT rule (Title 14 CFR Part 382). Obtained from:

<http://airconsumer.dot.gov/publications/disabled.htm>

Prohibition of Discriminatory Practices

- Airlines may not refuse transportation to people on the basis of disability. Airlines may exclude anyone from a flight if carrying the person would be inimical to the safety of the flight. If a carrier excludes a person with a

Did You Know?

Arriving at the airport or transportation depot with a list of emergency numbers is a great way to prepare for any situation. Below are a few of the numbers to have on-hand.

TSA Cares: 855-787-2227

TSA's Contact Center:

- Email: tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov
- Phone - 1-866-289-9673

For concerns about potential civil rights violations, you can contact TSA's Office of Civil Rights:

- Toll-free - 1-877-336-4872
- TTY - 800-877-8339
- E-mail - tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov

For information about overall air travel accessibility contact the DOT Air Carrier Access Hotline:

- Toll-free - 1-800-778-4838
- <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov>

To file a (non-security or non-safety) complaint please contact the Aviation Consumer Protection Division (ACPD) 24 hours a day at 202-366-2220 (TTY 202-366-0511) to record your complaint. Calls are returned Monday through Friday, generally between 7:30 am and 5:00 pm Eastern time.

*You may send ACPD a letter at:
Aviation Consumer Protection Division, C-75
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590*

disability on safety grounds, the carrier must provide a written explanation of the decision.

- Airlines may not require advance notice that a person with a disability is traveling. Air carriers may require up to 48 hours' advance notice for certain accommodations that require preparation time (e.g., respirator hook-up, transportation of an electric wheelchair on an aircraft with less than 60 seats).
- Airlines may not limit the number of persons with disabilities on a flight.
- Airlines may not require a person with a disability to travel with another person, except in certain limited circumstances where the rule permits the airline to require a safety assistant. If a passenger with a disability and the airline disagree about the need for a safety assistant, the airline can require the assistant, but cannot charge for the transportation of the assistant.
- Airlines may not keep anyone out of a specific seat on the basis of disability, or require anyone to sit in a particular seat on the basis of disability, except to comply with FAA or foreign-government safety requirements. FAA's rule on exit row seating says that airlines may place in exit rows only persons who can perform a series of functions necessary in an emergency evacuation.

Accessibility of Facilities

- New aircraft[1] with 30 or more seats must have movable aisle armrests on half the aisle seats in the aircraft.
- New twin-aisle aircraft must have accessible lavatories.
- New aircraft with 100 or more seats must have priority space for storing a passenger's folding wheelchair in the cabin.
- Aircraft with more than 60 seats and an accessible lavatory must have an on-board wheelchair, regardless of when the aircraft was ordered or delivered. For flights on aircraft with more than 60 seats that do not have an accessible lavatory, airlines must place an on-board wheelchair on the flight if a passenger with a disability gives the airline 48 hours' notice that he or she can use an inaccessible lavatory but needs an on-board wheelchair to reach the lavatory.
- Airlines must ensure that airport facilities and services that they own, lease or control are accessible in the manner prescribed in the rule.

Other Services and Accommodations

- Airlines are required to provide assistance with boarding, deplaning and making connections. Assistance within the cabin is also required, but not extensive personal services. Where level-entry boarding is not available, there must be ramps or mechanical lifts to service most aircraft with 19 or more seats at U.S. airports with over 10,000 annual enplanements.
- Disabled passengers' items stored in the cabin must conform to FAA rules on the stowage of carry-on baggage. Assistive devices do not count against any limit on the number of pieces of carry-on baggage. Collapsible wheelchairs and other assistive devices have priority for in-cabin storage space (including in closets) over other passengers' items brought on board at the same airport, if the passenger with a disability chooses to pre-board.

- Wheelchairs and other assistive devices have priority over other items for storage in the baggage compartment.
- Airlines must accept battery-powered wheelchairs, including the batteries, packaging the batteries in hazardous materials packages when necessary. The airline provides the packaging.
- Airlines must permit a passenger to use his/her Portable Oxygen Concentrator during the flight if it is labeled as FAA-approved.
- Airlines may not charge for providing accommodations required by the rule, such as hazardous materials packaging for batteries. However, they may charge for optional services such as providing oxygen.
- Other provisions concerning services and accommodations address treatment of mobility aids and assistive devices, passenger information, accommodations for persons with vision and hearing impairments, security screening, communicable diseases and medical certificates, and service animals.

Administrative Provisions

- Training is required for airline and contractor personnel who deal with the traveling public.
- Airlines must make available specially-trained “complaints resolution officials” to respond to complaints from passengers and must also respond to written complaints. A DOT enforcement mechanism is also available.
- Airlines must obtain an assurance of compliance from contractors who provide services to passengers.
- You may obtain an accessible electronic copy of 14 CFR Part 382 or this fact sheet at <http://airconsumer.dot.gov> or call DOT at 202-366-2220 to request a copy.

[1]“New aircraft” requirements apply to U.S. airlines with respect to planes ordered after April 5, 1990 or delivered after April 5, 1992. In general they apply to foreign carriers with respect to aircraft ordered after May 13, 2009 or delivered after May 13, 2010. No retrofit is required (although compliance with on-board wheelchair requirements became mandatory for U.S. airlines on April 5, 1992 regardless of the plane’s age). If older planes are refurbished, accessibility features (e.g., movable armrests) must be added.

Air Travel with a Service Animal

The Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 (ACCA) requires domestic airline carriers to permit service animals with appropriate identification to accompany an individual with a disability on a flight. Identification can include documentation, a harness, or simply the verbal assurance of the passenger using the animal. Also, bring along the dog's health certificates with proof of vaccinations, and make sure you've checked out any international requirements when traveling overseas. It is recommended to inform the carrier of the service animal at the time of booking. Upon arriving at security, the traveler is again encouraged to inform the Security Officer that the animal accompanying you is a service animal and not a pet. This will provide you with an opportunity to move to the front of the screening line since the Security Officer may need to spend more time with you.

At no time during the screening process should you be required to be separated from your service animal. The Security Officer should ask permission before touching your service animal or its belongings. Travelers are required to maintain control of the animal in a manner that ensures the animal cannot harm the Security Officer. The Department of Transportation enforces the ACCA. The US Department of Transportation-Aviation Consumer Protection is found at: 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590. (202) 366-2220.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) regulation designed to help passengers with service animals has gone into effect. As of May 13, 2009 all airlines must make sure there are pet relief areas, and escorts to those relief areas, for any passenger traveling with a service animal. Federal requirements for service animal relief areas at airports are evolving. The relief areas must be located at terminals and some terminal operators are not fully cooperating with airlines. The US Department of Transportation issued a proposed rule in September 2011 that will require terminal operators to comply with providing relief areas for service animals. BlazeSports recommends visiting the following website for an unofficial list of service animal relief areas at many airports:

<http://www.petfriendlytravel.com/airports>

Information on these provisions is available from the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, on the web at: http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm. The ADA also maintains an information line at: 800-514-0301 (Voice) and 800-514-0383 (TTY). The information line is confidential and ADA Specialists are available: M-W, F 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Th 12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time).