



# Preparing Passengers for Travel

## Journeys with checked baggage





## Introduction

This paper presents IATA's position on how baggage processing should be undertaken during the COVID-19 crisis. It presents an argument for the rapid adoption of services that enable passengers to travel with checked luggage whilst minimising the additional steps that must be undertaken when compared to cabin baggage.

## Relevance

The world is currently emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, however there is still no vaccine or antibody test that allow people to have confidence in their movements. As a result, precautions are being taken globally in order to minimise the further spread of infection, such as wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, face coverings, face shields, etc., additional cleaning and sanitisation of processing points and physical distancing.

These measures will impact the way that an airport operates, especially in the rate of flow of passengers through the airport, leading to an increase in the time and surface area needed for procedures such as baggage drop, security processing, boarding and baggage collection on arrivals.

## IATA Position

IATA's position is that in order to maximise the flow of passengers through airports, passengers should arrive at the airport with the maximum amount of preparation undertaken in advance of arriving at the airport. This applies to all areas of preparation, from health declarations and visas through to boarding passes and baggage tags.

Some of these areas are already well implemented and available for airlines to use, such as boarding passes, where off-airport delivery of the pass and the infrastructure to use such passes are well established. Others, such as those in the baggage world, are less developed. However, many solutions exist today and can't be readily implemented in order to reduce the number of touch points at the airport.

## How baggage impacts travel

Passengers typically carry baggage with them when they travel. This luggage is either journey essentials, such as medication and personal electronic devices that are most often carried as cabin baggage through to bulkier items which are often carried as hold baggage. Most people are familiar with the tensions caused by a desire to have all their possessions with them by carrying cabin baggage only, and the desire to travel smoothly by reducing the amount of cabin baggage carried and placing items in the hold.

In the current crisis there is a good argument for carrying a reduced quantity of cabin baggage, so that all passengers on the aircraft can easily find stowage for their essential items without having to move through the aircraft cabin to stow and retrieve their baggage. Reducing cabin baggage would also speed the aviation security processes for hand baggage as the number of pieces being screened would be reduced. Reducing cabin baggage to one item can smooth the boarding process, allowing passengers to walk onto the aircraft without queues on the jet bridge or in the cabin, and minimising the time that a passenger stands in the aisle of the aircraft next to other passengers already seated. However, passengers still need to travel with items that they need for their journey, and these need to be checked-in and reclaimed at the end of the journey. This paper presents mechanisms that can reduce the time and space taken for these processes and enable physical distancing between passengers from different flights on arrival.



## Health considerations for baggage

There is some discussion in the media about the longevity of COVID-19 on surfaces and how this can apply to baggage. Guidance on this can be found here:

<https://www.iata.org/en/programs/safety/health/diseases/> The fundamental question is whether a bag presents a risk of transmission to either other passengers or persons working at the airport. In countering the risk of COVID-19 to passengers and workers, a multi-layered approach is recommended. Most operational procedures are unchanged, whilst cleaning, good hygiene and the use of appropriate PPE is essential. Guidance can be found here: <https://www.iata.org/en/programs/covid-19-resources-guidelines/> Baggage handlers wear gloves whilst handling bags, so the risk of transmission from airport staff to passengers is minimal.

Considering the above, modifying baggage systems to have baggage sterilisation procedures is not recommended. Those airports that do introduce such measures are reminded of the WHO's position on health measures applied to baggage. This position is that there should be no charge to passengers for such measures.<sup>1</sup> As airlines' revenues come from passengers, charging airlines for the cost of such measures is akin to charging passengers.

## Electronic Baggage Tags

Electronic Baggage Tags (EBT) work with all baggage systems and can be integrated with airline applications to allow bags to be registered when the passenger checks in for their flights. The EBT will be programmed with the passenger journey data, allowing the passenger to proceed directly to a fast baggage drop. There is no need to collect a baggage tag from a kiosk, nor to queue at a check-in desk. The fastest possible route where no specific baggage drop exists it to make use of the out of gauge baggage acceptance point. Furthermore, Electronic Baggage Tags (EBT) can now be operated without an integrated battery, as they are capable of harvesting energy from a Near Field Communication (NFC) technology.

Electronic Baggage Tags are secure, as they cannot be changed without access to airline systems, and the data on the tag remains in place for the entire journey. They can display flexible information, including operational information and, crucially, a green stripe for journeys originating in the EU.

The investment needed by the airlines in terms of adopting EBTs is minimal. Suppliers of EBTs are aiding in integrating the EBT into an airline application and adoption can be completed quite quickly. Passengers would then have the choice to purchase and use an EBT if they felt that this would improve their journey experience.

## Home Printed Baggage Tags

Home Printed Baggage Tags (HPBT) allow passengers to print a baggage tag on a home or office printer, and then use a special holder to attach the label to the bag. These also allow passengers to arrive at the airport ready to travel, even if they must collect a holder for the printed baggage tag once at the airport.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO IHR, Article 40, 1. (e).: "Except for travelers seeking temporary or permanent residence... no charge shall be made by a State Party pursuant to these Regulations for ... (e) any health measures applied to baggage accompanying the traveler"



## Reusable RFID baggage labels

The Qantas Qtag is an example of a reusable RFID label that can be issued to the passenger, allowing a fast and simple baggage drop. The tags are robust and reliable and have no display that could be damaged. They are also individually registered to passengers, so if a bag is mishandled it is possible to identify the passenger from the tag.

## Off-Airport Services

Off-airport services can be considered as the ultimate in contactless baggage processing. The passenger can have their bag picked up from home and delivered to their final destination, allowing the passenger to travel with just cabin luggage. The staff who are collecting and delivering the bags take on some of the responsibilities of a check-in agent, and thus need to be aware of regulations for dangerous goods in baggage. The baggage is generally secured on acceptance so that there can be no interference with the passenger's baggage. Sometimes the company accepting the bag and delivering the bag are different, and elements of the product offering are controlled by regulators such as customs.

## Baggage Reclaim and Claims

There are simple techniques that can be introduced to minimise the risk of infection at baggage reclaims or at a baggage claims office. The first is to maximise the use of available reclaims so that passengers do not mix between flights whilst waiting for a bag (effectively dedicating a reclaim to an origin country or region). It is also possible to unload bags from a carousel and call passengers forwards to collect their bags individually, although this is not sustainable as volumes build.

Baggage claims are made when a bag is mishandled or damaged, and passengers generally wait whilst baggage is delivered and then must make a claim with arrivals hall staff. There are systems that allow this claim to be undertaken entirely online. This removes a further passenger interaction and queuing opportunity in the arrivals hall.

## The Regulatory Environment

The use of any off-airport services relies heavily upon the regulatory environment where the bag is being accepted and delivered. In some countries it is necessary for a passenger to collect their bag and carry it through customs on arrival, and in others the baggage tag is a controlled document and must be issued by an airline agent.

There have also been concerns raised about the duplication or production of fraudulent home printed baggage tags, in order to present falsified information on a bag to deceive customs officers or deliberately mishandle a bag, allowing a fraudulent insurance claim to be made.

It is important to remember that a baggage tag serves as an index into a database that contains the baggage journey information. Producing a baggage tag without having access to the airline systems will result in a bag not being accepted for travel at the airport. Similarly, copying a home printed baggage tag will cause an error at acceptance. The security for electronic baggage tags means that they cannot be copied.

The data surrounding a baggage journey makes it easy to detect when a tag has been interfered with. It is simply a matter of scanning a baggage barcode to get the latest information on a baggage journey, including all the airports involved in that journey. Should a passenger change a tag on arrival then this tag



can be scanned to verify the journey information. This would be of use to customs officers who can supplement their other intelligence gathering data with this information when needed.

It is also important to note that the security of the baggage is a distinct process, and no matter what route a bag takes through the airport it will always be screened for explosives. This means there is no safety risk from accepting a bag tagged at home. It can also be argued that off-airport services increase security, by reducing queues in the landside area of an airport and making such targets less appealing to terrorists.

IATA encourages regulators to enable the use of off-airport services, electronic and home printed baggage tags. These technologies do not increase the risks of mishandling baggage, nor risks to the safety of a flight.

## Conclusion

It is the view of IATA that passengers can arrive at the airport prepared for their journey across all aspects of their journey including baggage. For the passengers to be able to do this, airlines need to make key capabilities available to them. These are (in order of ease, however all may be implemented in parallel):

- Electronic Baggage Tags
- Home Printed Baggage Tags
- Off-Airport Services
- Reusable RFID tags

These capabilities will be useful to counter the risks of COVID-19 by reducing both interactions and also queue times (in the case of off-airport services, eliminating the queue all together, each of the other solutions reduces the queue time by an approximately equal amount) and as solid building blocks for the new normal operations that will emerge over the next 24 months.

## Annex 1 – Tips for rapidly adopting EBT

EBT manufacturers have produced implementation guidance that is freely available on the internet, and IATA has an implementation guide that can also be followed to adopt EBT. This guidance is available here: <https://www.iata.org/en/publications/ebt-guide/>

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## General Guidance

### Implementation:

- There is an IATA standard set of operations supported by an SDK, and each manufacturer may be able to provide this. The SDK is generally available for iOS and Android.



Modifications on the airline side:

- DCS – depending on the system used, the airline will be required to build the connection through their mobile app to communicate with their DCS(s). Some UI & UX updates to the app will be required for full integration. Other alternatives include:
  - o Option 1 – Airline does not have a mobile app that passengers can check in on – The airline may be able to use a manufacturer provided app and is **strongly advised** to develop a mobile check-in app as a matter of urgency.
  - o Option 2 – Airline mobile app prompts passenger to open a manufacturer app (while in airline app – one click) where data transfer can be completed in the passenger device app (Small UI update to provide prompt).
  - o Option 3 – Full integration, where the passenger can fully check their bag in from the airline’s mobile app (UI & UX updates required).
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Costs & Timelines:

- Costs and timelines vary depending on level of integration. Generally ranging between a 3-8 weeks and resources available to work on the project.