



Temperature Screening: A Public Health Responsibility

Existing Guidance

COVID-19 Spread: An unprecedented situation

Stopping the spread of COVID-19 is governments' top priority and enhanced coordination with aviation stakeholders is critical. Existing guidelines set forth by international organizations should be followed. Public health screening and funding is and will continue to be an inherent responsibility of governments and existing guidance material establishes how to perform those screenings jointly with airport authorities.

It is indeed recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) that airlines staff are neither appropriately trained nor have access to the necessary equipment for performing systematic passenger temperature screening.

Public Health Authority's Responsibility for Management of Health Measures at Airports

Building on past experiences with communicable disease outbreaks, WHO, ICAO and aviation industry organizations have developed extensive guidelines, toolkits and response plans to support governments, passengers, and the aviation industry in mitigating risks. This guidance enables all stakeholders to undertake efficient and swift actions.

In a [joint statement](#) issued on 6 March 2020, ICAO and the WHO reminded all stakeholders of the importance of following existing regulations and guidance, particularly the relevant Standards contained within the various Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).

As per the [WHO International Health Regulation \(2005\)](#) the responsibility for managing the risk of communicable diseases at airports and its funding rest primarily with public health authorities. Public health screening is inherently a governmental responsibility.

As per Standard 6.34 of the ICAO Annex 9 – *Facilitation*, each Contracting State, in cooperation with airport operators, shall ensure the maintenance of public health, including human, animal and plant quarantine at international airports. Furthermore, as per Standard 8.12, Contracting States shall comply with the WHO International Health Regulation (2005).

Provisions for temperature screening of passengers at airports are part of the guidelines issues by both Airports Council International (ACI) and ICAO. Section 5 of the [Airport preparedness guidelines for outbreaks of communicable disease](#) set the arrangements that are to be taken by airport and government authorities.



In order to ensure the highest level of protection to passengers and to increase the trust in those checks, health temperature screening should be conducted by trained staff who are equipped to avoid virus transmission and know how to detect and handle symptoms of illnesses.

A medically trained professional is best placed to determine if an air traveler presents a risk to the health of other passengers and crew members.

In contrast, an airline employee is not capable of making these determinations. The risk of an untrained airline employee inadvertently allowing an ill passenger to board a flight can and should be mitigated by a government regulated and implemented process. Airline staff do not have the legitimacy to approach the customer with an explanation of the test. It should be noted that when airlines handle their operations outside their base, they do not have the resources to support these additional duties, especially if they have a limited number of weekly frequencies.

Airlines have an important role to play in implementing public health measures by: preparing contingency plans, facilitating the dissemination of risk communication messages, remaining focused on visual observations for identifying ill travelers, managing ill travelers in cabin and reporting suspected cases on-board, among others.

IATA Position

IATA recognizes that extraordinary measures are needed during public health outbreaks and especially during the current unprecedented context. Airlines stand ready to cooperate with public authorities despite the decline of their financial posture. However, in consideration with global public health policies undertaken, if systematic temperature screening of each passenger is required it must be performed by the right agency that has full technical competency and legal ability to do it.

IATA urges all stakeholders to make the best use of existing guidance material developed by international and industry organizations. When systematic temperature screening is required, it must be undertaken within the framework already planned for between airport and public authorities.

Strong coordination between aviation stakeholders and health authorities, also under National Facilitation Committees in line with ICAO guidelines, is critical in times of crisis.

Should authorities decide that temperature screening remains necessary even though asymptomatic transmission is being observed with COVID-19, IATA encourages that it remains seamless, non intrusive and appropriate measures are in place to address situations of positive cases. Furthermore, given the temporary nature of those measures, setting clear triggers and indicators as to when to lift the measures and the associated infrastructure is essential to ensure that they remain relevant.