

# Coping with Post-Sept. 11 Airport Security

Travelers can do their part to boost airport security

By Sharon Tabor Warren

**S**ept. 11 changed travel, especially by air. The airlines have reduced personnel, security has increased and delays seem more the norm than on-time departures. It's all a given, and there may not be any noticeable changes for months. Maybe we'll never return to the good old days.

With that in mind, it behooves each of us to do our part. We can look on our contributions as our patriotic duty or as an expedient to air travel or plain American commonsense. Whatever we call it, let's just do it.

Check-in lines are longer and slower, but there are two common denominators for each waiting passenger: a ticket and a picture ID. Why not have them out and ready for the agent? I stood in a recent line for over an hour and watched numerous travelers reach the counter and waste time searching through purses, pockets and carryons in search of those two required items. What did they do while they waited in line, count ceiling tiles?

Security is tighter and it's slower. But there are some givens for every passenger in every security line. Pockets need to be emptied and purses need to be x-rayed. Computers have to be removed from their cases. Jackets and coats have to be screened; they cannot be worn through the metal detector. Casual observance of most security checkpoints reveals more than half the traveling public doesn't immediately adhere to the above criteria.

Contents of carryon bags are also restricted (see final item). Many security areas now have large stashes of tweezers, scissors, corkscrews, pocketknives, knitting needles, etc. Security doesn't care that your penknife was a graduation gift 40 years ago or that your knitting needles came through Ellis Island with your great grandmother. They're not allowed in carryon luggage. If you want them at your destina-



Prepare for delays at airports and try to make the best of your experience.

tion, pack them with your checked baggage and work on crossword puzzles during the flight in place of knitting or whittling.

Carryon bags are limited to one item that will fit under a seat or in an overhead bin and a single personal item, such as a purse, briefcase or computer. The maximum is two and a shopping bag counts as one. Granted, the agent at the check-in counter may reiterate this rule, but generally not unless it's a slow day. Security may also recognize a single passenger with too many items, but they aren't always able to associate the person with the items. That leaves it to gate personnel, and they catch it when the plane is boarding — or it may be the flight crew that sees the overloaded passenger boarding. Taking more than is allowed causes unnecessary delays and rearrangements — and the guilty passenger isn't going to win any popularity contests.

Delays are like death and taxes — they can't be avoided. Nothing will be gained by harassing the agent at the gate, or any other terminal personnel. They don't fly the planes and have no control over arrival and departure times. Their jobs are much easier when the flights arrive and depart on time, and they would have it that way if they could. Consider the impact of a delay and allow for it whenever possible. Booking flights with minimal layover time is not necessarily the best choice now. If you're due at a wedding in Atlanta at 2 p.m. on Friday, it would be wise to plan to arrive no later than noon on Thursday. If your vacation package in Cozumel begins on Saturday, keep in mind that you may forfeit a day.

No, we don't like it, but it's the way things are and we must learn to adapt. Take extra reading material (I always take at least six magazines) or a deck of cards for solitaire. Walk the terminal for exercise, and strike up conversation with other stranded passengers because they're feeling as restless as you are. Avoid drinking alcohol because it will only make the flight worse and try not to eat unless you're on the verge of starvation. Pack your carryon with a delay in mind: healthy munchies, something to sleep in, a clean shirt and underwear, a change of socks, all medications, and your makeup or shaving kit.

## What Can I Carry On?

The Federal Aviation Administration's Web site lists restricted items. Each airline also offers a list. Unfortunately, all lists are not the same. Security personnel are not employees of either the FAA or individual airlines, and they have the ultimate say at the airport. A good rule of thumb is, "If in doubt, leave it out." Place any questionable items, typically those with cutting edges or sharp points, in your checked baggage. 🚫