

TRAVERSING THE GLOBE

Volume 6, Issue 7

by Debbie Gulliver, University Travel Manager

September 2009

Secure Flight:

Now in effect for Domestic Flights...

Q. What is Secure Flight and what does it do?

A. Secure Flight is a behind the scenes program that streamlines the watch list matching process. It will improve the travel experience for all passengers, including those who have been misidentified in the past.

Q. What information will be collected by Secure Flight?

A. When fully implemented, Secure Flight will require all airlines to provide a **passenger's name** as it appears on the government issued ID they plan to travel with, **date of birth, gender,** and redress number (if applicable).

Q. Why is Secure Flight collecting this information?

A. Based on the comments received during the rulemaking process and through extensive testing and analysis, TSA determined that mandating the provision of the additional data elements of date of birth and gender would greatly reduce the number of passengers misidentified as a match to the watch list. It is to the passenger's advantage to provide the required data elements as doing so may prevent delays or inconveniences at the airport, particularly for those individuals who have similar names to those on the watch lists.

Q. What happens if my airline didn't ask for any of that information?

A. Secure Flight will be phased-in and each airline will be incorporating the necessary changes into their systems over the coming months. Passengers shouldn't be concerned if particular airlines don't ask them to provide the additional information right away; it should not impact their travel. Each airline will request this information as their capability to capture it is integrated into their individual systems.

Q. What can I expect when booking airline travel through the Preferred Travel Agencies?

A. Both Tower Travel and Passageways Travel agents will be asking for University traveler's legal name, gender, and birth date. Expect that in the near future, profiles will need to be updated on-line as well.

Q. How does Secure Flight affect my frequent flyer programs?

A. Please note that if you are enrolled in any airline frequent flyer programs in a different name than what is shown of your government ID that you will use for check-in, you should contact the airline frequent flyer department to change how your name appears to avoid any problems obtaining your mileage on your flights.

Please direct any suggestions or comments to the University Travel Manager, Debbie Gulliver, at telephone (517) 355-0343, or email gulliver5@ctr.msu.edu or fax (517) 432-4656.

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Secure Flight Con't

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Q. If the name printed on my boarding pass is different than what appears on my government ID, will I still be able to fly?

A. Boarding passes may not always display the exact name you provided when booking your travel. The name you provide when booking your travel is used to perform the watch list matching before a boarding pass is ever issued, so small differences should not impact your travel. Secure Flight is a behind-the-scenes process that TSA and airlines collaborate on to compare the information you provide against government watch lists. The additional data elements that you may be asked to provide, such as date of birth and gender, serve to better differentiate you from individuals on the government watch list.

You should ensure that the name provided when booking your travel matches the government ID that you will use when traveling. However, TSA has built some flexibility into the processes regarding passenger name accuracy. For the near future, small differences between the passenger's ID and the passenger's reservation information, such as the use of a middle initial instead of a full middle name or no middle name/initial at all, should not cause a problem for the passenger. Over time, passengers should strive to obtain consistency between the name on their ID and their travel information.

Q. How do I know if I am on the No Fly list?

A. If a passenger successfully obtains a boarding pass, his/her name is not on the No-Fly list. If a passenger feels they have been misidentified, redress is an opportunity to seek resolution and avoid future delays. The affected passengers often have the same or a similar name to someone on the watch list. Any passenger who believes he/she has been delayed or denied boarding; delayed or denied entry into the U.S. at a port of entry; or been subject to enhanced screening or inspection may seek redress through the DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) at www.dhs.gov/trip. DHS TRIP provides a single portal for travelers to seek redress for adverse screening experiences and to resolve possible watch list misidentification issues.

For Further Information on the Secure Flight Program, please visit

http://www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/layers/secureflight/index.shtm

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Advance Purchase:

When should travel reservations be made?

In the current economic climate, this study is timely in providing guidelines for Michigan State University travelers and travel arrangers:

Topaz International, a business travel benchmarking organization, looked at whether purchasing airline tickets in advance made financial sense. Historically, one of the best ways to obtain the lowest airfares has been to purchase tickets in advance. Typically, as the travel dates approached, the prices tended to go up.

To evaluate domestic airfares, Topaz International looked at over 900 city pairs to determine if purchasing in advance yielded lower priced airfares for typical business trips. In addition, Topaz also looked at whether a Saturday night stay yielded any additional savings. Surprisingly, the study found that travelers can save up to 51% of the cost of the airfare by booking 21 days in advance when compared with a 3 day advance ticket with a Saturday night stay.

For international travel, there was a clear trend for cheaper fares when using advance purchase options with Saturday night stays. Advance purchases of 14 – 21 days yielded much lower fares than 3 day advance purchases.

Whether booking a trip with a Saturday night stay over or not, the best prices were found with a 14 – 21 day advance purchase. Booking farther in advance leaves more likelihood that the trip will be changed or canceled which in turn costs the University more money in change fees and lost airfare costs. Booking closer to the departure date increases airfares dramatically.

When feasible, staying over a Saturday night may yield additional savings, but each trip should be evaluated on the savings versus the additional cost (i.e. hotel, meals, etc.) of staying any extra days.

At Michigan State University, guidelines are set forth in Section 70 of the Manual of Business Procedures. An updated version will soon read:

“Michigan State University Business Travelers are expected to obtain the lowest available fare that reasonably meets their business travel needs. To get the best price on airfare, it is important to book the flight in advance, usually 14-60 days prior to departure. For international travel, the MSU business traveler or travel arranger may wish to book as much as 120 days in advance.”

Direct Billing:

Utilizing our Preferred Travel Agencies has advantages...

1. No out of pocket expenses for airfare or rail; billed directly to up to 3 MSU account numbers
2. Access to negotiated travel discounts
3. Book travel your way: traditional travel consultant or on-line booking tool
4. Customer service available 24/7
5. Reservations monitored for changes/cancelations
6. Access to one stop shopping – all of your travel needs met
7. Multi Channel Distribution, Rate Desk for international airfares to guarantee lowest fares
8. Electronic Invoices (No more passenger receipts)
9. Consolidated purchasing allows MSU to negotiate contracts with travel vendors
10. Travel Alerts for destination(s) sent to travelers prior to departure
11. Travel preferences on file with each agency

And the Winners Are...

Tower Travel announces...

Tower Travel Management held a drawing for 2 sets of 2 round trip tickets valid for travel anywhere in the continental 48 states on United Airlines. Each reservation that was made (online or via telephone) from May 1 to June 30, 2009 was entered into the drawing. Congratulations go to Lisa Cook and Jonathan Ronald Althouse!

Save the Date:

Traveler Arrangers...

The Annual Travel Arrangers' Open House at the James B. Henry Center for Executive Development is scheduled for Tuesday, September 29, 2009. Topics will center around international travel. Invited speakers are from the MSU Travel Clinic/University Physician's Office, Office of Study Abroad, Risk Management and Insurance, and Export Controls and Trade Sanctions.

Invitations, with further details, will be sent out in September. I hope to see you there!