



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on November 3, 2010

Pilots Urged To Avoid Body Scanners

Airport Body Scanner Truth reported on Monday, November 1, that American Airlines pilots were advised to opt for the pat-down search rather than submit to repeated radiation from Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) screening procedures.

Dave Bates, president of Allied Pilots Association, collective bargaining agent for AA pilots, made the recommendation — and went so far as to say that U.S. airline pilots already receive higher doses of on-the-job radiation than nearly every other category of American workers, including nuclear power plant employees.



In his message he emphasized that the screening of pilots is out of control and does nothing to improve security. He urged all pilots to avoid the X-ray machines, using instead either a crew pass or biometric identification.

Bates also wrote to the TSA Administrator:

Our pilots are highly motivated partners in the effort to protect our nation's security, with many of us serving as Federal Flight Deck Officers. We are all keenly aware that we may serve as the last line of defense against another terrorist attack on commercial aviation. Rather than being viewed as potential threats, we should be treated commensurate with the authority and responsibility that we are vested with as professional pilots.

We are exposed to radiation every day on the job. For example, a typical Atlantic crossing during a solar flare can expose a pilot to radiation equivalent to 100 chest X-rays per hour. Requiring pilots to go through the AIT means additional radiation exposure.

I share our pilots' concerns about this additional radiation exposure and plan to recommend that our pilots refrain from going through the AIT. We already experience significantly higher radiation exposure than most other occupations, and there is mounting evidence of higher-than-average cancer rates as a consequence.

Bates called AIT a "needless privacy invasion." Though he has suggested pilots use alternative screening, however, that doesn't mean he likes the pat-downs.

He told members in Monday's message:

There is absolutely no denying that the enhanced pat-down is a demeaning experience. In my view it's unacceptable to submit to one in public while wearing the uniform ... all pilots [should] insist that such screening is performed in an out-of-view area to protect their privacy and dignity.

Bates encouraged pilots to maintain the utmost professionalism and composure, and remember that the procedures would probably be videotaped. He also advised them to keep in mind that flight safety is paramount, even if screening delays caused them to arrive late at the cockpit.



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While it's clear that Bates' sentiments were justified and reasonable, he called on the TSA to come up with a way for pilots to avoid the same screening procedures the general public endures.

But Bates isn't the only indignant flier. Two weeks ago in Memphis, ExpressJet Airlines pilot Michael Roberts [refused](#) both the scanner and the pat-down. He commented, "I'm just not comfortable being physically manhandled by a federal security agent every time I go to work."

Many would agree with Bates' message, especially in light of pilot safety, but are no doubt wondering why the general public isn't due the same regard. Travelers are in an uproar over privacy and health concerns resulting from the use of full body scanners.

Bates promised a conference call later in the week, to be followed by further guidance.

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