

Crime risks quadruple around big-city airports, study finds

By Harriet Baskas, msnbc.com contributor

The Transportation Security Administration worker recently caught [stuffing a stolen iPad down his pants](#) might raise concerns about security inside our nation's airports, but according to a [study commissioned by USA TODAY](#), travelers should be wary of crime outside big-city airports.

The odds of becoming a crime victim outside most major U.S. airports, according to the report, are four times greater than the national average.

Of the airports in the 29 cities studied, the area around Philadelphia International had the greatest risk; the area around Pittsburgh International had the lowest.

The study also looked at crime risks near 26 train stations in major cities. The area around the Amtrak station in Houston was ranked as the highest, though neighborhoods outside stations in Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia were also considered high risk.

"It's not surprising," said Mike Kelly, president of On Call International, a medical, security and travel assistance company. "There's so much inbound and outbound activity around airports. These are very exposed locations."

Kelly suggests travelers make a plan for how they will depart an airport or train station before they arrive. "Go online and get familiar with the geography of the area so you know what direction you're supposed to go when you leave the airport or the train station. Print out a map or take handwritten directions so you don't have to wait for the GPS in your rental car to get going."

When getting a cab outside a train station or airport, Kelly also urges travelers to keep an eye on their luggage. "Don't get into the cab without making sure everything actually gets into the trunk," he said. "We just had a client who lost a suitcase because the cabdriver left it at the curb."

"People often don't pay attention when they're traveling," said Charlie LeBlanc, president of security services for Frontier MEDEX. "They're thinking about the meeting

they're going to instead of how they're going to get to that meeting. So vigilance is really the key."

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