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[How airport security around the world could change after the Brussels attack](#)

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Travelers know what to expect from airport security: limits on liquids, requirements to remove shoes and belts, occasional pat downs and luggage X-rays.

But these security measures, many put in place after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York City, focus on eliminating attacks on planes — not at the airports. And after the [attacks in Brussels](#), airport security has been thrust into the spotlight.

Airports across the country are working to reevaluate security risks and update procedures. These changes could take several different forms says Jim Hutton, chief security officer of travel risk management company [On Call International](#).

More visible security

Immediately following the attacks, many airports around the world increased the number of security officers on patrol.

"You're going to see a lot more visibility in security presence," Hutton told *Mashable*. "Officers, even military, marked vehicles — things you aren't used to typically seeing in an airport. Perhaps additional X-ray equipment, more tools of the trade. You might be searched more than once; there could be additional screening of luggage."

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is adding security to major U.S. airports and rail and transit stations, according to U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson.

"TSA is also working closely with state and local law enforcement, airport and transit authorities, and the aviation industry in order to augment that security," Johnson said in a [statement last week](#).

Additional security at airport entrances

The two explosions at Brussels' Zaventem airport happened before security checkpoints, by the check-in counter. A similar attack happened in 2011 at Moscow's Domodedovo International Airport when a suicide bomber killed 37 people in the pre-security area. Today, that airport has security checks to enter the public areas of its terminals.

Many airports in the Middle East and Africa check passengers' identification and luggage when they arrive at the terminal entrance. However, western airports are fairly open: It is not necessary to pass through security to enter, only when passing through secure checkpoints to gates.

In the U.S., the TSA is responsible for airport screening at checkpoints. But the public areas are under shared jurisdiction with local authorities. This area is usually monitored by uniformed and plain-clothed security patrol, along with security cameras. However, airport areas before controlled security checks are considered "soft spots," meaning they are more vulnerable.

Ben Vogel, the editor of *IHS Jane's Airport Review*, told [The National](#) that airports may soon consider covert explosives-detection technologies and passenger screening at terminal entrances.

This increased security would be costly as it would require terminal reconfiguration — but Brussels airport is already considering it. Although it will be months until the airport is fully repaired, the airport's temporary check-in area has [enhanced security measures](#) and will have additional baggage screening before passengers reach the departure lounge.

"It's going to be hard to establish a 'hard line' where security begins," Hutton said. "Because, when you think about airports and types of airports, no two are alike. There's LaGuardia that's incredibly crowded, or Logan, that's on the water. The geography of an airport is always different."

Limited access for vehicles

In cases where an airport's security cannot be rearranged, Hutton said that airports could start restricting vehicle access.

In one extreme scenario, Hutton described an airport that would only allow access via a shuttle. All cars — personal or taxis — would park and drop passengers offsite, where they would go through approved, secure transport.

"We need to be imaginative about security," Hutton said. "In cases where you can't change the environment, the change may need to be procedural."

What passengers can do

No matter what security changes are implemented, travelers can contribute to their own safety by being prepared and conscientious.

Hutton suggests that travelers arrive to the airport early to account for any extra security checks, and to be conscious about how they pack their luggage.

"If you don't draw unnecessary attention to your luggage, that makes security's job easier," Hutton said. "Multiply that by 50,000 and security can focus on the real risks. Be mindful of signage, listen to directions: That can help manage the flow."

"Never assume that anything is going to be the same as when you last did it."

More conversations

"The security challenges we face today should not prompt us to build new walls," United Nations World Tourism Organization Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said at a tourism conference.

He called for the integration of tourism into national and international security agendas, saying that "enhancing security and enabling more seamless travel should always go hand-in-hand."

But, Hutton said, amidst this talk of increased security, a conversation about personal liberties will also emerge for Americans.

"There are some who swear by profiling, or as they call it, behavioral detection," Hutton said. "They think it is very effective. But then there are others with significant civil liberty concerns.

"A conversation is going to start about where the hard line of security and the balance between security and freedom and the public will have a great say in what changes, if any, happen."