ACI World publishes alternatives to physical distancing

With a series of simulations indicating that physical distancing reduces checkpoint capacity by up to 75%, working with EBEA Consulting and Transoft Solutions, ACI World has designed 11 alternative measures to keep passengers and employees safe

Airports Council International (ACI World) has released findings of simulations on the impact of applying physical distancing at airport security checkpoints that show capacity could be reduced by up to 75%. These findings are represented in its Security Checkpoint Modelling videos.

Working with EBEA Consulting and Transoft solutions, ACI World has designed 11 alternative measures to physical distancing, keeping passengers and employees safe while, at the same time, keeping checkpoints moving when passenger traffic inevitably increases.

These health and safety measures are explained in the Security Checkpoint Modelling videos, one for airports greater than 250 pax/hour per security lane, and the other for airports with a more standard flow of traffic (lower than 250 pax/hour per security lane). This list of measures meet ACI World's Smart Security vision to increase security, operational efficiency and improve customer experience at checkpoints. While many airports are exploring touchless processes, these measures can help airports until such technologies are implemented.

Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic brought airports to a virtual standstill, airports around the world are planning for a return of passengers, while also providing extra measures to protect passengers and employees. Security checkpoints are a key consideration.

"Airports are examining all aspects of their operations as they seek to recover from the impact of COVID-19, foster confidence in air travel and reassure passengers that health and safety is the number one priority.

These simulations and resulting suggested mitigation measures encourage regulators and airports to plan ahead to facilitate an increase in passenger numbers, without having to compromise health and safety," says Luis Felipe de Oliveira, Director General, ACI World Director.

Physical distancing has proven to be a good mitigation measure against the spread of the virus, but once passenger traffic increases, this will not be viable or sustainable long term, if airports are to keep operations running efficiently.

"It demonstrates that there will be a point as traffic recovers, in which physical distancing might not be compatible with an efficient security checkpoint operation.

This flags the need for airport operators to start taking action now to be better prepared for when this

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time comes. Implementing alternative measures will ensure a smooth and safe passenger experience in every stage of the recovery process," notes Ramon Anton, Director & Co-Founder, EBEA.

Three scenarios were tested to include the need for increased space for physical distancing in the queue. The results suggest that the checkpoint capacity was reduced by up to 75% in the worse-case scenario. In the best-case scenario, there was a reduction in capacity by 50% of a security checkpoint when implementing physical distancing.

The 11 different mitigation measures to physical distancing are designed to keep passengers and staff safe. Some examples include:

- Face masks
- Pre-travel testing
- Installation of plexiglass
- Crowd monitoring software
- Continuous tray or UVC cleaning and high touchpoint cleaning

"Alternative measures proposed to physical distancing will still achieve the same outcome, where passenger and staff members remain well protected, while reducing the impact of delays on airport operations.

By adopting measures that are aligned with other industries, airports can demonstrate that they are following best practices and the World Health Organization guidance, and in so doing, can help increase passenger confidence," adds de Luis Felipe de Oliviera.

The impact of physical distancing on airport security checkpoints webinar explains how the simulations were developed, expected and received, which takes place on Thursday, 22 October at 12:00 UTC.

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