

Traveling with Hearing Loss



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If you Google “Traveling with Hearing Loss” you get 3,060,000 results. Of course, before you reach the tenth page, you start seeing references about sound traveling through the ear of someone with a hearing loss rather than the person with hearing loss traveling. Still, there is a lot of ink spilled on the topic. It’s clearly something people with hearing loss are concerned about. And for good reason. Everyone has heard a story about a miss or a near miss at the airport when the gate number was changed and the announcement was not heard. Until we see real time displays of audible announcements at the gates, we will continue to hear those stories.

Security gates are often another source of stress. Following September 11, 2001, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created to strengthen the security of the nation’s transportation systems and ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. Today, TSA secures the nation’s airports and screens all commercial airline passengers and baggage.

HLAA is part of TSA’s Disability Coalition, which seeks to address the needs of people with disabilities who go through those security gates. The coalition was an early part of TSA’s efforts to reach out to passengers with disabilities and continues to actively provide support and information for people with disabilities. Recently, TSA has taken a proactive approach to their staff training, reaching out to disability groups to help provide sensitivity trainings across the nation.

In 2011, TSA announced “TSA Cares,” a helpline to assist travelers with disabilities and medical conditions. Travelers may call TSA Cares toll free at 855.787.2227 prior to traveling with questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint. TSA Cares serves as a dedicated resource specifically for passengers with disabilities, medical conditions or other circumstances or their loved ones who want to prepare for the screening process prior to flying.

The hours of operation for the TSA Cares helpline are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST, excluding federal holidays. After hours, travelers can find information about traveling with disabilities and medical needs on TSA’s website. That website includes pages devoted to people with hearing loss and another about traveling with a service animal.

E-mail TSA-ContactCenter@dhs.gov, to ask questions, provide suggestions and file complaints. If all else fails, file complaints online at www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/travelers-filing-complaint. 

Lise Hamlin is director of public policy at HLAA and can be reached at lhamlin@hearingloss.org. Read her blog at <http://hlaa-advocacy.blogspot.com>.