

TIPS FOR TRAVELING SAFELY WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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Heightened security measures at U.S. airports have impacted the ability of musicians to carry their instruments in-cabin. Below is important information to help you and your instrument safely reach your destination.

CHOOSING AN AIRLINE AND MAKING YOUR RESERVATION:

- 1. Know airline policy.** Each airline may adopt unique restrictions regarding carry-on items. When selecting an air carrier, call to confirm whether the dimensions of your instrument meet the airline's requirements for carry-on items, and note the name of the agent you have called. Some airlines also make their policies available online. Carry a copy of the policy with you.
- 2. When making your reservation, request a seat assignment at the back of the plane.** During the boarding process, passengers seated in the rear of the aircraft are boarded immediately after first class and special needs passengers. As one of the first on-board, you will have more time to stow your instrument, and more space options.
- 3. Notify reservation agents of oversized items.** Many airlines have a limit on the number of oversized items allowed in-cabin. Even if you have paid an additional fee or book an extra seat for your instrument, request that the reservation agent record that you are traveling with an oversized item that is a musical instrument.

This information made possible through a collaboration of the American Federation of Musicians; Department for Professional Employees - AFL-CIO; American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP); American Symphony Orchestra League; MENC: The National Association for Music Education; Recording Industry Association of America, and more than twenty national members of the Coalition in Support of Musical Instruments as Carry-On Baggage.

PACKING AND CARRYING YOUR INSTRUMENT:

- 1. Remove all extraneous items from the case.** All tools and other items should be checked or carried separately to simplify the screening process. What are completely familiar items to you - cleaning fluids and tools, valve oil, end pins, reed knives, mutes, tuners, metronomes - may seem mysterious to screening personnel.
- 2. Limit the number of carry-on items.** In addition to your instrument, carry only one, small item.
- 3. Arrive early.** You may hear that check-in and screening takes only minutes – THIS MAY NOT BE TRUE FOR MUSICIANS. Arriving early will allow for the time you may need to work with security and flight crews to make sure your instrument gets safely on board. Bear in mind that problems may take some time to correct. Therefore, it is imperative that you arrive AT THE GATE at least one hour before boarding time.

DEALING CALMLY WITH LAST-MINUTE PROBLEMS:

It is crucial that as a traveling musician you recognized several important facts.

- 1. The most important responsibility of airport and transportation officials is security.**
- 2. The most important responsibility of gate attendants and flight attendants is safety.**
- 3. The most important responsibility of the captain is safety AND security.**

Your instrument represents an unusual item that could very well be unexpected. Gate and flight crews that have a very short period of time to seat passengers in an aircraft try their best to deal with the unexpected concisely and quickly. You (and your instrument) are only one of many passengers that will likely have special needs. Therefore, don't take it personally when a gate agent or flight crew member seem indifferent to your concerns. Their time is limited.

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However, you have the backing of the airline to travel with your instrument onboard if the airline permits it. Therefore, it is recommended that you remain calm and polite. In many cases, the problem may be resolved. Consider this:

1. If you are stopped by a flight attendant, **calmly and quickly explain** the precautions you have taken to prepare your instrument to safely travel in-cabin.
2. **Be accommodating** by suggesting placing the instrument in the rear of the aircraft, or securing the instrument with cords or ties (bring your own).
3. If necessary, immediately ask to deplane so that you can **resolve this matter with airline supervisors**. Remember, you have fifteen minutes at most to resolve this issue before the plane backs away from the gate.
4. **DO NOT block the way of boarding passengers.**

Finally, prepare yourself for the possibility that you may not be able to travel with your instrument in-cabin – even if you have followed all possible procedures. What will you do? Are you willing to send your instrument by air courier? Is it packed well enough to withstand transportation in the cargo hold? Should you, or can you, travel by train or car?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW:

For years, professional and student musicians traveling by air have carried musical instruments on board as carry on baggage. In doing so, they have often faced numerous uncertainties when using commercial passenger aircraft. Many have been stopped at the last minute and refused boarding. Musicians have been turned away from flights and those trying to make connecting flights have often had to settle for greater inconveniences in order to complete their journey. In some cases, musicians have had to make the choice between stowing rare, expensive and often irreplaceable musical instruments in the cargo hold or having their travel plans interrupted, delayed and even cancelled.

The Coalition in Support of Musical Instruments as Carry on Baggage led by the American Federation of Musicians has petitioned the

Congress to address this issue. Section 135 of S. 1447, the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001 outlines the will of the United States House of Representatives that the new Under Secretary of Transportation for Aviation Security develop new regulations as a remedy to inconsistent treatment of musicians and their instruments. This important provision of the act reads as follows:

S. 1447 Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001, Relating to Public Law 107-71 Page 41, Section 135

SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

It is a sense of the House of Representatives that (1) the Under Secretary of Transportation for Security should develop security procedures to allow passengers transporting a musical instrument on a flight of an air carrier to transport the instrument in the passenger cabin of the aircraft, notwithstanding any size or other restriction on carry-on baggage but subject to such other reasonable terms and conditions as may be established by the Under Secretary or the air carrier, including imposing additional charges by the air carrier.

Though **this language does not give musicians the specific right to carry any musical instrument onboard**, it does provide the Coalition with the tools it needs to encourage the Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop a lasting solution through the federal rulemaking process.

The AFM and the Coalition have forwarded relevant information to the FAA rulemaking office to assist them in their deliberations. The agency is now reviewing procedures that it will adopt. Whatever final rules are put into place to facilitate the in-cabin transportation of musical instruments, these new procedures will have to be observed by all musicians. It is anticipated that each airline that agrees to transport musical instruments will have to comply with these new security procedures as well.

Until these new regulations are in place, musicians are asked to work cooperatively with ticket agents, airport security personnel, gate attendants and flight crews to resolve any difficulties encountered with regard to the transportation of musical instruments.