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Transportation Security Administration; [www.tsa.gov/blog](http://www.tsa.gov/blog)  
A screenshot of TSA's new blog, "Evolution of Security"

## No question too gross for airport screeners online

by **JOYCE CHANG**

Feb 06, 2008

Transportation agency blogs its way into the hearts of travelers...or not

WASHINGTON -- The people who inspect you and your luggage at airports aren't losing sleep over the generally "extremely small to remote" possibility that you might get a nasty foot fungus from being required to remove your shoes at airport security checkpoints.

Furthermore, the Transportation Security Administration wants you to know that its 2003 study commissioned with the Department of Health and Human Services found "15 percent of the public may be affected with athlete's foot at any given time." It helpfully adds, "Think about that next time you're trying on clothes at the mall, looking for a new pair of shoes or going off the high dive at the local pool."

These are among the fun tidbits posted by TSA employees on the agency's new online blog, "Evolution of Security," which launched on Jan. 30 for travelers to comment on airport security and get answers from the TSA.

The day after the site launched, a post titled "Wow! What a Response" showed the TSA's childlike wonder that "more than 700 comments at last count" had been posted.

Forums include "shoes," which discusses the rationale of making travelers remove their shoes at checkpoints, "inconsistencies" in screening policies at different airports and assorted "gripes and grins."

The blog acknowledges that TSA policies are sometimes confusing or frustrating to travelers.

TSA blogger "Bob," whose biography says he was a singer songwriter who traveled the world with his band before becoming a Behavior Detection Officer, writes, "Throughout the ages, there have been many unanswered questions that continue to baffle the human race. Who built Stonehenge? Is there life on other planets? Why does the TSA make me place my liquids in a clear sealable baggie?"

The "liquids" forum, which is about limiting liquid carry-on items, is helpfully prefaced by TSA's announcement that "Liquids cover 70% of the earth and they also make up a good percentage of our comments from the traveling public."

Many posts expressed frustration that the TSA confiscates certain liquids and just throws them away in a trash can at the gate, rather than disposing of them like the hazardous materials that they can supposedly be.

Ed Kittel, chief of the Explosive Operations Division, explained the TSA's liquid policies in a short video, which was appropriately set to a backdrop of plastic bottles that contained clear and murky brown liquids – ominous.

Meanwhile, some travelers suggest screening may become a bit too invasive. One post envisions which body parts will be searched as the threat level changes:

"Low - Your pockets  
Guarded - Your nostrils  
Elevated - Your mouth and ears  
High - All of the above  
Severe - Call your Proctologist"

TSA acknowledges that not everyone is playing nice on the virtual playground, saying "Some [comments] have been downright mean and cranky but that's okay too."

They may have been talking about posts like this one: "I think I have it figured out .... You put us through hell before we board so by the time we get on the airplane we'd gladly rip any terrorist to shreds!"

TSA blogger "Lynn" can at least take fashion criticism. One passenger writes: "I would like to know more about the TSA's policy on flip flops...I can understand why people who wear Crocs should have to take their footwear off because Crocs are hideous and anyone wearing them should be subjected to extra screening regardless, but there is no way that flip flops pose any sort of threat to national security."

Lynn: "As an occasional Crocs wearer, ouch, that hurts. Can't argue with you about the ugliness, but they sure are comfortable."

Despite how intimidating the TSA's high-tech explosive detection machines and bomb-sniffing dogs may seem at times, the agency admits there's at least one thing it still can't do:

"Don't forget, we want your feedback but it has to be in the right place [forum] because we can't move comments around on this blog yet."

\*Oh, by the way, the TSA could be monitoring your activities on the blog – not just in the airport. The Web site policy states:

"TSA may share the information provided by members of the public with facility operators, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, or other government agencies as necessary to respond to potential or actual threats to transportation and national security, or pursuant to its published Privacy Act system of records notice DHS/TSA 006, Correspondence and Matters Tracking Records (CMTR), 68 FR 49503-49504."

So much for consumer-friendly.

## Related Links

[TSA's blog: "Evolution of Security"](#)

**"Some type of booty..."**

**Here's one exchange about a traveler's concerns about getting foot diseases from the floors at security checkpoints:**

**Posted by Anonymous:**

"SINCE IT IS MANDATORY TO TAKE OFF OUR SHOES, PLEASE PROVIDE BOOTIES TO PROTECT OUR FEET."

YOUR FLOORS ARE FILTHY AND LADEN WITH DISEASE-CARRYING BUGS.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT NOT EVERYONE HAS THE SAME LEVEL OF HYGIENE. WOULD YOU AS A TSA PERSON WANT TO EXPOSE YOUR FEET TO DISEASE? I AM SURE THE ANSWER IS NO.”

**Posted by Glen:**

*How about Booties?*

*In response to anonymous who would like booties for their feet...*

“I understand your concern on the hygiene issue. While part of TSA’s mission is to promote great customer service the reality is that customer service in aviation is a partnership between the airport authority, the TSA, and the airlines. While I speak only for my airports most of them do in fact provide some type of ‘booty’ to passengers as a customer service enhancement. Those who don’t provide footwear ensure the cleaning crew cleans those floors regularly. My recommendation is to start with your airport and explain your concern to them...the same could be said about having plastic baggies at the checkpoint for folks who forget to bring them to the airport. The airports also care about customer service and sometimes a gentle reminder goes a long way...”

Jay

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