

Industry Awareness Message

CREDENTIAL AUTHENTICATION TECHNOLOGY (CAT)

Background

Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) is a new checkpoint technology that provides a primary means for authenticating travel and identification documents (ID) and determining a passenger's Secure Flight status. CAT satisfies the TSA mission need to effectively detect IDs that are fraudulent, expired, or show evidence of tampering. Additionally, CAT verifies a passenger's Secure Flight pre-screening status in near real-time and provides the Travel Document Checker (TDC) with the most current information to ensure only verified passengers proceed into the appropriate screening lane. CAT is used by Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers at several security checkpoint lanes.

The technology enables three critical enhancements to security. First, CAT enhances detection capabilities for identifying fraudulent documents such as driver's licenses and passports at TSA security checkpoints and increases efficiency by automatically verifying passenger identification. Second, CAT will also cross-check the identity document presented by the passenger with the passenger's reservation information submitted to Secure Flight. Third, CAT will confirm the passenger's pre-screening in near real time through a secured connection to ensure that the screening applied at the checkpoint matches the most up-to-date information.

Overview

- TSA anticipates that the new technology will enhance security by effectively verifying passenger identification and pre-screening to determine whether identification documents presented at the checkpoint are authentic, fraudulent, or expired.
- This technology will provide TSA officers with enhanced detection capabilities for identifying fraudulent and/or invalid passenger identification and boarding documents. CAT will enable TSA to cross-check the passenger's identity document with the identity information used by Secure Flight to prescreen the passenger.
- Travelers who approach the TSA travel document checking podium do not have to show their boarding pass because the CAT unit verifies the traveler was prescreened by Secure Flight for departure from that airport for their flight.
- CAT provides confirmation of the traveler's flight details, ensuring they are ticketed for travel that day. CAT also displays the pre-screening status (such as TSA PreCheck) the traveler is eligible for, all without a boarding pass.
- CAT does not eliminate the requirement for passengers to check-in with their airline. Passengers still need their boarding pass when they get to their gate to show the airline representative before boarding their flight.

- CATs examine acceptable forms of ID that can be scanned for various patterns embedded in the document to verify its authenticity.
- In cases where a passenger's information cannot be verified by CAT (i.e., children under age 18 without an ID), the TSA officer at the travel document checking station will require boarding passes to conduct the manual processing, in accordance with TSA procedures.

Q&A

Q1: What is CAT?

A1: Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) is a new checkpoint technology that confirms the validity of a traveler's identification (ID) and confirms their flight information as a tool for Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers at several security checkpoint lanes.

Q2: How does the technology work and what will the process be at the checkpoint?

A2: When a traveler hands the TSA officer their photo ID, the officer places it in the CAT unit, which scans the ID and informs the TSA officer whether the ID is valid. Travelers who approach the TSA travel document checking podium do not have to show their boarding pass because the CAT unit verifies the traveler is prescreened to travel out of the airport for a flight that day. However, CAT does not eliminate the requirement for passengers to check-in with their airline. Passengers still need their boarding pass when they get to their gate to show the airline representative before boarding their flight.

The technology will automatically verify the authenticity of the document by analyzing security features embedded in the photo ID. The system will also confirm the passenger's flight status in real time through a networked connection to Secure Flight, which is the traveler vetting program. After the ID is successfully scanned and passenger ID is validated, the passenger will be allowed to enter the checkpoint to be screened.

Q3: If the flight is cancelled, will the CAT reader still allow access, since the passenger was originally booked on a flight?

A3: CAT will hold a passenger's reservation and pre-screening status for 24 hours after the scheduled time of departure; this is useful for passengers who are delayed.

Q4: If an individual printed out a reservation (unpaid) for a flight, will the CAT deny them access?

A4: If the passenger has a Secure Flight record, whether from a reservation (including standby reservations), gate pass, or sterile area pass (for airports that allow shoppers access), CAT will receive and provide the travel document checking TSA officer with the proper pre-screening instruction for that passenger.

Q5: Travelers have said that the TSA officer at the travel document station is sending passengers back to the airline check-in counters. Why?

A5: Travelers need to be most attentive when they book their flights. They must enter their names exactly as they appear on their IDs. For example, if their ID says William, they can't purchase a ticket using the name Bill because the CAT system is looking for an exact match between the name on the ID and the name ticketed to fly. Sometimes travelers inadvertently transpose the numbers in their birthdates, and again, the system is looking for an exact birthdate match associated with the ID and the individual who is ticketed to fly. If these situations arise, the traveler will need to go back to the airline to update and correct the passenger data recorded for security purposes (e.g. SSR DOCS). Airlines have an existing process used to verify the identification of inhibited passengers. Airline personnel are encouraged to use that process to verify and update passenger security information.