



Transportation
Security
Administration

Know Before You Go

Multicultural Branch, Office of Civil Rights & Liberties, Ombudsman, and Traveler Engagement

FOR TRAVELERS WITH NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS ITEMS

WHAT TO KNOW

- **TSA Cares:**
 - TSA Cares is a toll-free helpline, 1-855-787-2227 or Federal Relay #711, available for travelers to ask questions about screening or to request help at the checkpoint. You may call from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern time Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time weekends and holidays.
 - If you would like assistance at the checkpoint, TSA recommends that you call no less than 72 hours ahead of travel so that TSA Cares has the opportunity to coordinate checkpoint support. Checkpoint support may include coordination with a Passenger Support Specialist (PSS). Each airport has different resources; therefore, the level of assistance you receive at the checkpoint can vary. Some airports have an individual who will call you to gather additional information and arrange a meeting time and place. Other locations notify the checkpoint manager of your itinerary, but no pre-contact is made. If you arrive at the checkpoint and have any concerns before, during, or after the screening process, you should immediately request to speak with a Supervisory Transportation Security Officer (STSO) or a PSS for assistance.
 - If you have a religious item that you do not want a TSA Officer to touch because of the tenets of your Native American religious beliefs, you should call TSA Cares before your travel and request that a PSS assist you through the checkpoint. Passenger Support Specialists have received training on special screening considerations and have access to a job aid regarding screening Native American religious items.
 - To the extent possible consistent with required screening procedures, a Passenger Support Specialist will try to facilitate screening of your religious items in a manner that does not require them to be handled by TSA Officers.

- **Communication:**

- If you have a religious item that you do not want a TSA Officer to touch because of the tenets of your Native American religious beliefs, please clearly and politely communicate that to TSA Officers when you begin the process of divesting your carry-on baggage and personal property into bins for x-ray screening. Please explain that the item has religious significance and your religious beliefs hold that the item should not be touched by a non-practitioner of your Native American religion.
- You may ask for an explanation of the screening procedures that will be performed.
- You may request to speak with a STSO, PSS, or manager.
- You may request that a STSO, PSS, or manager be present during the screening procedures described below.

- **X-Ray Screening:**

- Carry-on luggage and all property carried with you at the checkpoint must be screened with x-ray technology. Bins are provided to hold items undergoing x-ray technology.
- When divesting your property into x-ray screening bins, you should unpack and separate any religious items as much as possible. Place religious items in an x-ray bin by themselves with nothing on top of them. You may request a “3-1-1” clear plastic bag in which to place religious items before putting them in a bin. If available, a bag will be provided.
- You may ask TSA Officers for instructions about how best to arrange your religious items in a bin.
- You may request that a STSO, PSS, or manager be present during the x-ray screening procedure.
- Do not place other bins on the x-ray conveyor belt close to a bin containing religious items.
- Unpacking and separating religious items for x-ray screening will help facilitate better x-ray images so that religious items may be cleared without the need for further screening procedures.

- **Visual Inspection:**

- If x-ray screening of religious items results in an alarm, your carry-on luggage and property may also be subject to visual inspection by TSA Officers.

- If x-ray screening of religious items results in an alarm, TSA Officers will attempt to resolve the alarm and clear the items using visual inspection without handling the items. Placing religious items by themselves in x-ray screening bins will help facilitate effective visual inspection.
 - At any time, you may request that a STSO, PSS, or manager be present during the visual inspection procedure.
 - If further visual inspection is required, you may ask to personally hold and display a religious item for TSA Officers or place it on a flat surface for viewing.
- **Explosives Trace Detection (ETD):**
 - If an x-ray screening alarm cannot be resolved through visual inspection, ETD screening may be necessary.
 - If ETD screening must be performed on your religious items, you may ask TSA Officers to collect a sample without picking up and handling the items.
 - If ETD screening must be performed, you may also ask to hold the religious item or lay it on a flat surface while a sample is collected.
 - If ETD screening must be performed, you may also ask that the TSA Officer wear gloves or change gloves prior to performing screening.
 - At any time, you may request that a STSO, PSS, or manager be present during the ETD screening procedure.
 - For ETD testing, the area is swabbed and the swab is tested for the presence of potential explosive residue.
 - TSA Officers may also swab a traveler's hands. Travelers can request a new swab prior to their hands being sampled.
 - A TSA Officer of the same gender conducts explosive trace detection, except an ETD of your hands need not be conducted by a TSA Officer of the same gender. You may request that a male TSA Officer perform the ETD screening of religious items.
- **Physical Inspection:**
 - If other screening methods are insufficient to clear an item, physical inspection may be necessary.
 - If you have utilized the TSA Cares process and/or communicated that you do not want your religious items to be handled, TSA Officers will, to the extent possible under standard operating procedures, only conduct physical inspection of those items if other methods of screening are insufficient.
 - At any time, you may request that a STSO, PSS, or manager be present during a physical inspection.

- If further physical inspection of a religious item is necessary, you may request that a TSA Officer put on gloves or change into new gloves before touching the item.
 - If additional physical screening of a religious item is required, you may explain to TSA Officers how best to hold or place the religious item.
 - You may request that a male TSA Officer perform the physical inspection of religious items.
- **Private Screening:**
 - You can request private screening at any time and be accompanied by a companion of your choosing. A second TSA Officer of the same gender will always be present during private screening.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- **Contact TSA Cares:** If you are traveling with special religious items, it is recommended that you call TSA Cares in advance of your travel.
- **Packing:** Pack religious items in a container that can be separated from other belongings and placed by itself in a bin for x-ray screening. Do not use a metal container. Try to use a container that can be easily opened so that you can remove religious items and spread them out in separate bins for x-ray screening. It is best to pack religious items in a clear plastic bag or other clear plastic container.
- **Divesting for X-ray Screening:** Unpack and separate religious items as much as possible. Try to place them in an x-ray screening bin by themselves with nothing on top of them. You may request a “3-1-1” clear plastic bag in which to place religious items before putting them in a bin. You may also ask for help arranging your religious items in bins.
- **Arrive Early:** Get to the airport well in advance of your scheduled flight to leave plenty of time to meet a Passenger Support Specialist and organize your religious items for screening.
- **Physical Inspection May Be Required:** TSA will try to facilitate your security screening in a manner that does not require TSA Officers to handle religious items. Contacting TSA Cares in advance of your travel is the best way to help TSA facilitate

your screening in this manner. TSA may have to physically inspect a religious item if it cannot be adequately screened using x-ray, visual inspection, ETD, or other screening procedures. Physical inspection may involve a TSA Officer touching the religious item. If you have an item that you absolutely do not want a TSA Officer to touch under any circumstances, you should not carry that item with you to an airport security screening checkpoint. You may wish to consider alternative methods of getting the item to your destination.

- **Checked Baggage Is Also Subject to Physical Inspection:** TSA does not recommend placing important religious items in your checked baggage. The majority of checked baggage is screened without the need for a physical bag search, but TSA may inspect your checked baggage during the screening process. If your property is physically inspected, TSA will place a notice of baggage inspection inside your bag. This is to inform you that an officer conducted an inspection of your property