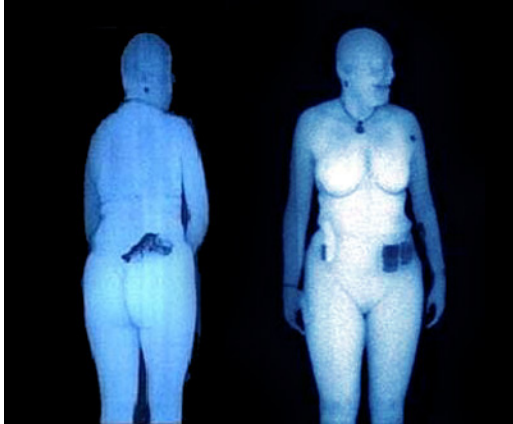


WHOLE BODY IMAGING FAQ

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Whole Body Imaging scanners produce a three-dimensional image of the passenger's nude body, including breasts, genitals, buttocks, prosthetics, binding materials, and any objects on the person's body, in an attempt to identify contraband. These scanners may out transgender people to TSA staff and potentially subject transgender people to further screening at the airports. The alternative to going through the scanners is a thorough manual patdown.

WHAT IS WHOLE BODY IMAGING?

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) defines Whole Body Imaging—also called Advanced Imaging Technology—as “an umbrella term used to describe technologies that enable the TSA to detect prohibited items including weapons, explosives and other metallic and non-metallic threat items concealed under layers of clothing without physical contact.” These technologies create a three-dimensional image of the passenger's nude body and any objects found on the person's body. TSA uses this technology to detect contraband, although in a very invasive way. Airports are increasingly using full-body scanning technology to screen passengers, as a primary or secondary method of screening.

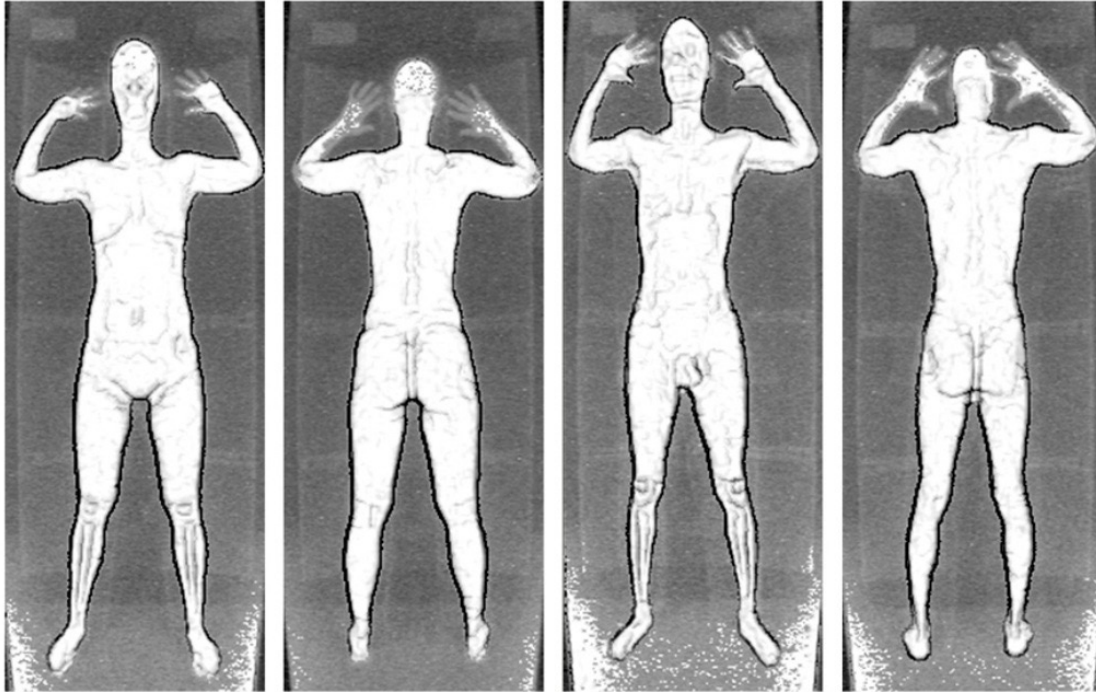
HOW DOES WHOLE BODY IMAGING TECHNOLOGY WORK?

TSA currently uses millimeter wave and backscatter X-ray technology to conduct its full body image scans. Millimeter wave technology directs high speed radio frequency waves at the passenger and interprets the waves after they bounce off the passenger to create a virtual three-dimensional image of the passenger's body and any objects that can be found on their body. The radio frequency is 10,000 times weaker than the radio frequency emitted by a cellular phone. Backscatter machines use low-level X-rays that reflect off of the body to produce a two-sided images of the body's contours and any objects that can be found on the body. According to the TSA, a single scan exposes a traveler to radiation comparable to two minutes of flying on an airplane. Both technologies produce a similarly detailed image of the body.

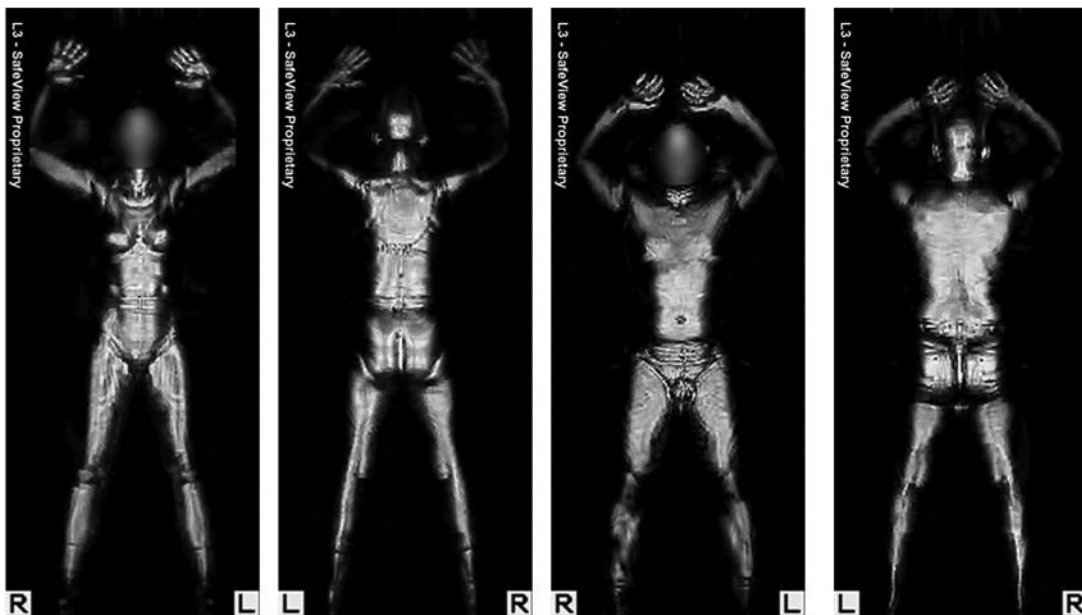
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WHAT WILL THEY BE ABLE TO SEE?

The image produced is an image of the passenger's bodily contours, including breasts, genitals, buttocks, prosthetics, binding materials, and any other objects on the person's body. TSA officers have the capability of zooming in on any area on the person's body. The first image on this page shows scans produced by backscatter X-ray scanners, which has been "cloaked" using a computer algorithm. The second image on this page shows scans produced by the TSA's millimeter wave scanner. The second image on this page shows a scan This is how the TSA says the machines are set to display at airports. The images on the previous page are unfiltered backscatter images, representing the full capacity of the machine. According to the TSA, airport staff do not have access to unfiltered images. As you can see, any of these scans could potentially out a person as transgender.



An image taken with backscatter image technology



A similar image taken with millimeter wave technology

WHAT ABOUT MY PRIVACY?

The images are viewed elsewhere in the airport by a TSA agent in a secure room with no windows. To ensure anonymity, the TSA apparently blurs the facial features of passengers when the images are being viewed by calculating where the passenger's face is on the screen and blurring that area. However, the process is reportedly imperfect—sometimes only portions of the face are blurred or it misses the passenger's face altogether. Other body parts are not blurred.

Although the imaging systems that the TSA uses are designed for the transmission and storage of images, The TSA states that the software capability to capture and store images is intended only for testing purposes and is entirely removed from machines when they are installed at airports. In other words, the images are gone once the traveler has been cleared. Employees are not permitted to bring personal communication devices into the room with them.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

The primary concern NCTE has with Whole Body Imaging is the potential for transgender people to be outed to TSA personnel. Although the TSA claims that privacy is provided by blurring an individual's face and sequestering those who view the images from passengers, the agents reviewing the images are still required to communicate via two-way radio with the agents interacting with the passengers. The images produced are clear enough to clearly identify one's genitals, breasts, prosthetics, and binding materials. If a transgender person's body looks different from what the TSA agent considers "normal," the passenger may be subjected to further searches and/or humiliation under the auspices of security measures.

Even if the TSA creates protocols around the treatment of transgender people and provides that they are not to be singled out for further screening solely on the basis of genitalia or gender nonconformity, the person may still be outed to the TSA personnel through two-way radio communication. Outing transgender people at airports can have profound impacts on employment and physical safety. In larger cities, this may seem relatively harmless because, even if the agent finds out that the person in front of them is transgender, they are unlikely to ever see this passenger again. In smaller cities, passengers often interact with the agents they encounter at the airport in other places in society, such as the grocery store or movie theater.

WHAT IF I OPT OUT OF WHOLE BODY IMAGING?

You have the right to refuse Whole Body Imaging. However, you will then be required to submit to a thorough manual patdown. Current patdown procedures are much more intrusive than in the past. They involve TSA officers using their palms and fingers to touch underneath and between breasts, inside thighs and in the groin area and buttocks. While the TSA has said these new procedures are intended to improve safety, many travelers find the techniques extremely uncomfortable and inappropriately intrusive. A patdown could also reveal binding, packing or prosthetic materials, or out you as transgender.

According to TSA policy, a patdown should be performed by an officer who is of the same gender as the gender you are currently presenting yourself as. This does not depend on the gender listed on your ID, or on any other factor. If TSA officials are unsure who should pat you down, ask to speak to a supervisor and calmly insist on the appropriate officer. You also have the right to choose whether a patdown is conducted on the spot or in a private area, and if in a private area, whether to be accompanied by a traveling companion. Pat downs will usually take longer than the Whole Body Imaging process would normally take, especially if you request a private screening area.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO AVOID PROBLEMS AT THE AIRPORT?

The TSA's new policies present travelers with a difficult choice between invasive touching and a scan that reveals the intimate contours of the body. NCTE encourages transgender travelers to think through the available options and make their own decisions about which procedure feels safest and least uncomfortable. Following are some considerations that may inform your decision.

Any foreign object on the body will likely show up on a scan as an unusual or unknown item requiring additional screening. Objects on the body will likely be regarded as "anomalies" during a patdown if they do not conform to the expected contours of the body, e.g., binders. Be prepared to (at a minimum) give a brief description of such items to an officer, or check them in your luggage so that you can minimize delays.

Items containing liquid, gelatinous or powder substances will likely trigger additional security screenings and therefore we recommend that you pack these items in your checked luggage or leave them at home if possible.

Wigs or hairpieces may require additional screening if they are bulky or not form-fitting. If you have already gone through a metal detector or body scanner, you may request that a patdown be limited to your hairpiece, or that you be permitted to pat the area down yourself and have your hands swiped for chemical residue.

WHAT IF I DO ENCOUNTER A PROBLEM?

Both travelers and TSA personnel have the right to be treated with dignity, discretion and respect. If you encounter any issues, politely ask to speak to a supervisor immediately. Do not raise your voice or threaten TSA staff; this only results in additional delays.

You have the right to file a complaint about any incident with the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, here: http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/structure/editorial_0373.shtm. We encourage you to do this immediately after the incident, or as soon as you are able, and also to let NCTE know of the problem. This helps both us and the TSA know of the problem and hopefully resolve and prevent future problems.

NCTE opposes the routine use of full-body scanners and the new invasive patdown procedures. We have and will continue to work with the TSA to minimize privacy intrusions and ensure respectful treatment of transgender travelers.

If you encounter difficulties at the airport because of your perceived gender expression or transgender status, please contact NCTE at 202-903-0112 so that we can work with the TSA to prevent the problem from occurring in the future.

** Images are from Newsweek and TSA websites on Whole Body Imaging.*