# [***City airport beefs up security systems***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KF-3P00-01D6-W09V-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Star Phoenix (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

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**Body**

Air travellers leaving Saskatoon Airport may notice little difference as Canada's new Air Transportation Security Authority (CATSA) takes over, said airport manager Bill Restall.

But changes to security are taking place.

"We're working towards making security as effective as possible but as transparent as possible to the travelling public," Restall said.

The federal agency, established in April, took over operation of airport pre-boarding screening Wednesday. Airlines had previously conducted screening.

The StarPhoenix; Saskatchewan News Network

One billion dollars of CATSA's five-year, $1.9-billion budget will be used for explosive-detection systems.

CATSA has installed trace-detection equipment to screen carry-on luggage, and equipment will do the same for luggage loaded onto airplanes, said Randall McCauley, the agency's vice-president of public affairs.

Trace-detection equipment consists of a cotton swab rubbed onto carry-on luggage to check for minute traces of chemicals including explosives.

The new equipment allow electronic devices -- such as pagers, ***cell phones*** and computers -- to be screened without switching them on, McCauley said.

The equipment is expected to be installed at all 89 Canadian airports by 2005.

"Part of the challenge is that they're awfully big machines and fitting them into airports requires a lot of re-engineering and construction work," McCauley said.

CATSA advises passengers to carry camera film in carry-on luggage, because of potential damage by the new equipment.

Saskatoon travellers have become more aware of another security feature that has always been tight at the airport -- tolerance for uttering threats or comments about weapons or bombs.

In the 1980s, Saskatoon had the highest rate of passengers being detained for questioning after making careless remarks of any similar-sized airport in the country.

"We've always run a very diligent security system in Saskatoon and that made it very easy for us to adapt to all the new regulations that came out," Restall said.

"We don't strive to meet the regulation, we strive to be better than the regulation.

"People are more aware of the circumstances now and are more prudent with their comments."

Rules brought into effect Wednesday in the United States require that all bags be screened by explosive-detection systems (EDS). Canada has a similar law but will phase it in over several years, Restall said.

Security requirements prohibit Restall from saying exactly when all of Saskatoon's EDS will be phased in but he said they are already installed throughout the airport, which underwent renovations earlier this year.

"We're putting in security systems that for the most part will be transparent to the passenger but in fact will be the latest, state of the art security systems," he said.

The changes are part of Canada's national program to meet all international air transportation safety standards, he said.

Restall would not say how much the security equipment cost. It was paid for through a combination of grants from CATSA and capital funds raised by the $5 airport improvement user fee charged to any traveller who departs from Saskatoon Airport.

That fee, implemented in 1999, is one of the lowest in Canada, Restall said. Most fees are $10, $12 and $15, he said. Air travellers also pay $12 per trip ($24 round trip) as a federal security fee.

There is also more security staff at the Saskatoon airport, but Restall would not say how much more.

The cost of security has had a dampening effect on air travel, Restall said.

Use of Saskatoon Airport was down about six per cent in 2002.

"The $24 Canadian security fee is hurting short-haul service. People who can use another mode of transportation may not fly because of price. That's something we're strongly discussing with the Canadian government.

"The Americans did a survey and found that since Sept. 11, their travel of under 250 miles is down 18 per cent, travel between 250 and 500 miles is down 14 per cent and travel over 500 miles is about the same as before."

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