

## AIRLINES: ADVANCE PASSENGER INFORMATION (API)

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### Key points for agents and operators

- The UK Government's e-Borders programme requires airlines to provide API on a growing number of routes.
- The US Government's Secure Flight programme will be implemented from 31 October 2009 requiring provision of API 72 hours before departure.
- Other governments also require API.
- Airlines and tour operators have made provision for the upstream (pre-departure) collection of API by other operators, by agents, and by passengers – see Data Collection below.
- Data protection statements are included in this guidance note for use by Members.

### INTRODUCTION

New API requirements place an increased burden on Members to collect and process customer information. This guidance note explains what the main requirements are and what Members need to do in order to meet them.

### INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

The UK Government requires airlines to collect API (also called Travel Document Information, or TDI) for passengers prior to travel on routes to and from the UK (see e-Borders programme below). Governments of some other countries also require API. Airlines will only provide each country's authorities with the relevant information required by them. However, some governments also require airlines to provide them with Passenger Name Records (PNRs, also called Other Passenger Information, or OPI) which is passenger data contained within the reservations system. This is in addition to, and not a substitute for, information which may be collected by way of the passenger completing an immigration form on board the aircraft or on arrival at their destination airport.

For most countries, API is restricted to the standard information contained in the Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) in machine-readable passports which can be scanned or swiped at airport check-in and transmitted to the country concerned at the time the aircraft departs. For passengers without machine-readable passports, the information is keyed in manually at check-in by the airline or ground-handler.

The machine-readable zone (indicated by chevrons >>>>) holds the passenger's biographical details, i.e. full name, date of birth, gender, nationality, passport number, country of issue and expiry date of the passport. The electronic chip contained in biometric passports contains MRZ data and is capable of holding biometric features (such as facial and fingerprint recognition) used by governments to establish positive identification. This biometric feature isn't currently used for API data collection purposes.

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However, some countries are now requiring additional information from passengers that isn't contained in passports, or they're requiring it earlier, or both, e.g. the USA. Airlines are therefore putting tools in place so that the information can be collected in advance of the passenger's arrival at check-in, i.e. upstream.

### US requirements

The USA is one of the most popular countries visited by UK citizens and its laws require airlines to collect the following API, which is in addition to the information contained in passports:

- Country of residence.
- Alien Registration Number (Green Card) for those who have US residency.
- Destination address in the USA for all passengers **except** US citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (Green Card holders), and in some cases those who continue their journey beyond the USA within eight hours of arrival.

#### US address details

The US address is where the passenger will spend their first night in the USA. It should include the zip code wherever possible. The content of a hotel address should include as much detail as possible, such as hotel name, street name, city, state, and a zip code if known. As a minimum, hotel name and city should be given.

- If passengers are joining a ship, they must provide the vessel or cruise name plus the US city of embarkation.
- If a passenger doesn't know their destination address, for example if they're on a fly-drive package, they must make a reasonable attempt at providing a general itinerary, e.g. touring the Grand Canyon.
- If a passenger is flying to the USA and back in one day (for a business trip, for example), they should give the address of the business they're visiting.

The above, other than the US address, also applies to transit passengers who transfer through the USA for the purpose of continuing their journey to a third country, where the time period between arrival in and departure from the USA doesn't exceed eight hours. They must possess confirmed onward reservations out of the USA and not leave the airport. Passengers must provide the non-US country name, the carrier or vessel name, and the flight number.

Currently, airlines must provide API electronically to the US Government as each passenger or group checks in.

### US Secure Flight

The US Government implemented Secure Flight for domestic flights within the USA in early 2009. The second phase, to incorporate international flights, will be implemented from 31 October 2009.

**Airlines must provide the following four items of Secure Flight Passenger Data (SFPD) 72 hours before departure, or as soon as known for a late booking:**

- Full name (as shown in the passenger's passport).
- Gender.

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- Date of birth.
- Redress number (if one exists).

A Redress number is a unique number given to an individual by the US Authorities, where the name has regularly identified that person for additional screening, but the person poses no risk to the USA. This will enable them to travel to the USA in the future without the need for additional screening.

It follows that airlines and tour operators will ask for this data earlier than 72 hours before departure which will entail upstream collection. This, in turn, will require changes to GDSs and airlines' own systems.

### US ESTA

The 12 January 2009 requirement for passengers travelling under the Visa Waiver Program to obtain authorisation to travel to the USA by the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) doesn't replace the need for airlines to transmit API. For details on the ESTA, please see our guidance note *Passports & Visas*.

### UK requirements: e-Borders

e-Borders is a key component of the Government's border technology programme, aimed at making the UK safer and speeding up travel for legitimate travellers. The programme aims to deliver a modern border control which is more secure, effective and efficient.

The purpose of e-Borders is to collect and analyse passenger, service and crew data provided by carriers (air, sea and rail), in respect of all journeys to and from the United Kingdom in advance of travel, supporting an intelligence-led approach to operating border controls.

e-Borders will affect all carriers, passengers and crew who travel into and out of the UK. This will include yachts and leisure craft, fishing vessels and private aircraft making international journeys. It's the legal responsibility of carriers (air, rail and sea) to submit passenger and crew information to the e-Borders operation centre in advance of travel.

e-Borders requires carriers to provide biographical information (full name as shown in eligible identity document, date of birth, nationality, gender, travel document type, country of issue, document number and expiry date) relating to a passenger, all of which is contained in the machine-readable zone of a passport or national identity card.

Data must be provided electronically to e-Borders by the carrier. There's no question of passengers having to complete any form of questionnaire at check in. If the data hasn't been collected in advance, it'll be captured by swiping their passport.

The implementation of e-Borders began on 13 May 2009 on international air journeys and will be expanded across all air routes by end 2010. International rail and sea carriers are also expected to come online for e-Borders during 2010.

More information on e-Borders can be found at

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/travellingtotheuk/beforetravel/advanceinfopassengers/>

### EU requirements

A further development is an EU proposal whereby carriers will be required to provide standard passport and PNR data, to the extent that it's available, for journeys into and out of the EU. Simply put, charter airlines only have

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access to MRZ data, which they'll be required to provide. They don't have PNR data, so won't be required to provide this.

All elements of the EU proposal are already met by e-Borders and won't require any additional data collection for passengers making journeys to or from the UK. Discussion and decisions regarding the EU PNR proposal have been suspended until the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified.

### DATA COLLECTION

#### Collection methods

US Secure Flight requires data collection to be completed no later than 72 hours before departure. To the greatest extent possible, airlines will attempt to collect data in advance, not only for flights to the USA but also for flights to other destinations, in order to minimise congestion at the airport.

Data will be captured upstream (pre-departure) as follows:

#### Scheduled airlines

- Through GDSs during or after the time of booking or via the airline's own Manage My Booking (MMB) facilities.
- Online bookings: during or after the time of booking via the airline's own MMB facilities.
- During the online check-in process.

#### Charter airlines/tour operators

- The UK charter airlines (including other airlines performing charter operations) have developed a standard spreadsheet for use by third party sharers, small tour operators and ad hoc customers using standard CM4 data transmission format. This builds on existing spreadsheets already in use, to which columns have been added for e-Borders and Secure Flight requirements, and is available to any Member with an automated reservation system. The UK charter airlines will provide their contracted operators with a guide to passenger manifest spread-sheets, detailing their individual requirements (likely to be updated on a seasonal basis). These are straightforward, and assistance will be provided.
- A number of the UK charter airlines have developed individual online MMB micro sites allowing passengers, or their agent on their behalf, to go online and enter their passport details up to six months in advance of their holiday/flight.

**The rule of thumb is that API should be provided to the principal from which the holiday/flight reference comes.** For charter flights, passengers, or agents, should complete API on the MMB micro site which will, in turn, automatically complete the spreadsheet from the tour operator to the airline. This collection method includes agents who are dynamically packaging.

#### Cruise operators

Cruise operators have been collecting API for some years. Agents should follow their instructions.

#### Collection by ABTA Members

Members should obtain the passenger's name as shown on their passport, at point of sale, and enter that automatically in the booking. For the USA, the other SFPD should also be collected a minimum of 72 hours in advance. For other flight routes, please follow the airline's instructions.

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It's important that the information is accurate so that passengers don't have any delay at check-in or when passing through immigration on arrival in these countries.

It's important that Members use the same booking reference for the charter airline/operator as they do for the passenger so that they can be easily matched when details are entered on the MMB micro site.

Responsibility for the provision of passenger names for groups, including ad hoc charters, lies with the Member who has taken the allocation.

The MMB micro sites are expected to go live from late October; the date will be advised to Members by the charter airlines. Members will have to trawl back through any US bookings to ensure that they've provided the SFPD needed for Secure Flight.

Members contemplating their own system changes should bear in mind the additional fields needed for API and potentially for other information to be collected in future. The UK Identity & Passport Service recommends that name fields that accommodate forename(s) together with surname should be 60 characters in length to capture the vast majority of nationals. For the purpose of accuracy, composite names should be clearly separated and a distinction drawn between family name/surname and given names.

### Incomplete or inaccurate data

Failure to provide API could result in carriage being denied. Delays in providing API may result in passengers being subject to additional security screening, which may delay their travel arrangements – particularly in relation to journeys to the USA.

The charter airlines are likely to email agents to advise them that data is missing and that they should contact the passenger. Agents using the scheduled airlines' online booking facility will be reminded of the API requirement during the booking process with the ability to provide data at that time. A reminder email will be generated closer to the departure date. However, bookings made via GDSs won't contain direct passenger contact details so an email won't be possible. Some (but not all) airlines may return GDS-created PNRs onto queue as a reminder to enter API data. Airlines are currently exploring how best to handle this.

## DATA PROTECTION

Wording for Members to use on tickets, brochures, terms and conditions, etc. regarding passing on information for border control purposes:

### Customer consent

To be included in booking forms:

*I agree that the personal data, which has been provided to (name of ABTA Member) in connection with this booking, may be passed to government authorities for border control and aviation security purposes.*

### Data protection statement

To be included in brochures and other publicity material:

*Please be assured that we have measures in place to protect the personal booking information held by us. This information will be passed on to the principal and to the relevant suppliers of your travel arrangements. The information may also be provided to public authorities such as customs or immigration if required by them, or as required by law. Certain information may also be passed on to security or credit checking companies. If you travel outside the European*

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*Economic Area, controls on data protection may not be as strong as the legal requirements in this country. We will only pass your information on to persons responsible for your travel arrangements. This applies to any sensitive information that you give to us such as details of any disabilities, or dietary/religious requirements. (If we cannot pass this information to the relevant suppliers, whether in the EEA or not, we will be unable to provide your booking. In making this booking, you consent to this information being passed on to the relevant persons.) Full details of our data protection policy are available upon request.*

Members should be aware that transmission of personal data, including passport details, using standard email is likely to breach data protection requirements. Members should consider using secure email protocols.

**This document is intended as a guide only and can't be a substitute for specific advice.**