

TRANSPORTATION

Air Canada Details New Sanitization Protocols

By **Michael B. Baker** / May 19, 2020 / **Contact Reporter**

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Air Canada has introduced a range of safety and sanitation measures to minimize Covid-19 spread once air travel demand begins to recover.

The program, dubbed CleanCare Plus, is a "layered approach" that covers the passenger experience from check-in to being on board the aircraft, including many protocols the carrier already had implemented, Air Canada VP of safety Sam Elfassy said. Such programs will be necessary for airlines to implement and communicate in order for travel demand to return, as passengers will need to feel assured that their fellow passengers won't transmit the virus, he said.

"Despite the financial carnage we are going through, the first priority is the health and safety of our customers, colleagues and the communities that we live in, so we are applying the best recommendations to prevent this from continuing to transmit," Elfassy said. "Absent a vaccination that is broadly based, once government restrictions are eased, the confidence will have to be there in order for us to return to fulfilling the needs of customers wanting to travel."

The program includes requiring passengers to wear facial coverings throughout their journey, including check-in and in flight. Check-in includes contactless temperature checks and a brief health questionnaire, and check-in kiosks and counters are sanitized regularly. Travelers also might be asked health-related questions while boarding.

On board, Air Canada is using hospital-grade disinfectants and electrostatic sprayers to disinfect touchpoints including seatbelts, armrests, cabin windows and shades, light switches, tray tables, entertainment screens, ceilings, overhead bins and lavatories, Elfassy said. In-flight service will be limited to bottled water and pre-packaged meals.

Last Friday, Air Canada began distributing new disposable care kits that include a complimentary mask, gloves, bottled water, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes for passengers. The carrier on Friday also began blocking seats in Economy cabins so that no customers are seated adjacent to one another, which it will continue doing until the end of June.

Elfassy said the program is designed to adapt over time as the situation develops and as regulations change. Temperature checks, for example, ultimately might become the responsibility of the government via airport screening.

"We would love for temperature checks to be taken on by someone other than ourselves," he said. "This is a public health emergency, so we have to do everything now."

Elfassy also expects that "more burdensome and less effective measures" will be replaced over time. The International Air Transport Association, for example, on Tuesday said that it is hopeful that "scalable, accurate and fast" Covid-19 testing when available could be implemented at the start of the travel process, which could assure a "sterile" travel environment for the rest of the journey.



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