

Airline alliances urge testing over quarantines

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Three global airline alliances are urging governments to put into practice common guidelines for passenger testing and digital health pass technology, to help people start flying again.

Oneworld, Star Alliance and SkyTeam said testing could be part of an overall approach to restart international travel, by reducing reliance on the "blunt instrument" of quarantines aimed at halting the spread of the coronavirus.

New testing guidelines from the United Nations' International Civil Aviation Authority could "pave the way for a framework of trust to be established between countries," Star Alliance CEO Jeffrey Goh said in the joint statement on the oneworld.com website. Oneworld CEO Rob Gurney and SkyTeam CEO Kristin Colvile joined in the statement.

The alliances—representing 58 member airlines—cited recent tests of the CommonPass digital health pass, which uses a smartphone app to securely verify that passengers have complied with health requirements, whether these be a test or a future vaccine.

Airlines and their industry group, the International Air Transport Association, have urged the use of commonly agreed testing procedures instead of quarantines. So far there have been different approaches to, and experiments with, testing requirements, with quarantines and [travel restrictions](#) remaining in use—and international air travel down 92% on pre-COVID-19 levels.

The reduction in travel has hit a wide range of travel-related businesses and jobs, such as airport workers, hotel employees and taxi drivers. Testing presents a number of challenges, including how long it takes to get a result, possible false positives or false negatives, and people who may be infected but only [test](#) positive several days later.

Surveys indicate that fear of sitting next to someone who is infected and unwillingness to travel into a quarantine are major deterrents to flying.

SkyTeam includes Aeroflot, Delta, Air France-KLM and China Airlines

in a partial list of members. Oneworld has, among others, American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Qantas and Alaska Airlines while some of Star Alliance's members are Air Canada, Lufthansa, SAS, and United.

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