

Airlines plan to ask passengers for contact-tracing details

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In this Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021, file photo, travelers wear face coverings as they queue up at the north security checkpoint in the main terminal of Denver International Airport, in Denver. Major U.S. airlines say they will ask passengers on flights to the United States for information that public health officials could use for COVID-19 contact tracing. The trade group Airlines for America said Friday, Feb. 19, that the carriers will turn over the information to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski, File)

The U.S. airline industry is pledging to expand the practice of asking passengers on flights to the United States for information that public health officials could use for contact tracing during the pandemic.

An industry trade group said Friday that the carriers would turn over the information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which could use it to contact passengers who might be exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Delta and United have been doing that since December. On Friday, an industry trade group said that American, Southwest, Alaska, JetBlue and Hawaiian will also ask passengers to make their names, phone numbers, email and physical addresses available to the CDC.

The airlines had long resisted [government efforts](#) to require them to gather passenger information and provide it to health agencies. They said they don't have the information on passengers who buy tickets from other sellers such as online travel agencies. They also argued that gathering the information and making it immediately available to the government would be time-consuming and require costly upgrades to computer systems.

The CEO of trade group Airlines for America, Nicholas Calio, said carriers hope that their offer of voluntary information gathering, along with testing of passengers entering the U.S., will lead the government to lift restrictions on international travel.

Although the requests are only voluntary, United Airlines said Friday that since December most of its international customers have provided contact details.

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