

Thanksgiving air travel to rebound to 2019 levels, TSA says

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Transportation Security Administration administrator (TSA) David Pekoske listens during an event to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Sept. 11, 2021, in Springfield, Va. The number of people traveling for Thanksgiving this year is expected to rebound to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, but the Transportation Security Administration say it is ready to handle the surge. Credit: AP Photo/Luis M. Alvarez, File

The number of airline passengers traveling for Thanksgiving this year is expected to rebound to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, but the Transportation Security Administration says it is ready to handle the surge.

Administrator David Pekoske said Wednesday he expects agency staffing to be sufficient for what's traditionally TSA's busiest travel period.

"We are prepared," Pekoske told ABC's "Good Morning America." He said travelers should expect long lines at airports and plan to spend a little more time getting through security.

In 2019, a record 26 million passengers and crew passed through U.S. airport screening in the 11-day period around Thanksgiving. But that plummeted in 2020 as the pandemic kept people at home.

Pekoske said he didn't think a vaccine mandate going into effect for TSA agents Monday would have any effect on staffing for Thanksgiving next week.

"In fact, implementation of the mandate will make travel safer and healthier for everyone," he said. "So, we see quite a significant increase in the number of our officers that are vaccinated, and I'm very confident that there will be no impact for Thanksgiving."

Pekoske told NBC's "Today" on Wednesday he remains "very concerned" about the issue of unruly passengers as incidents on airplanes have continued.



Two airplane pilots pass by a line of passengers while waiting at a security check-in line at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, ahead of Fourth of July weekend, July 1, 2021. The number of people traveling for Thanksgiving this year is expected to rebound to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, but the Transportation Security Administration say it is ready to handle the surge. Credit: AP Photo/Shafkat Anowar, File

"The level of unruly behavior is much higher than I've ever seen it," he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration says it has referred 37 cases involving unruly airline passengers to the FBI for possible criminal prosecution since the [number](#) of disruptions on flights began to spike in January.

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