

Now boarding: Startup airline uses robots to sanitize planes

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Start-up Avelo Airlines, which has established its East Coast hub at Tweed-New Haven Airport, said Thursday it has begun using autonomous robots to disinfect aircraft cabins to guard against the

spread of COVID-19.

Avelo said it is the first airline in the U.S. to use the robot manufactured by the Canadian manufacturer Aero HygenX that is designed to use ultraviolet light to sanitize cabins.

The introduction of the robots comes as a federal mandate requiring air travelers to wear masks is set to expire March 18. Federal health officials have not indicated whether the requirement will be extended.

Avelo said the robot, named "RAY," destroys up to 99.9% of harmful [pathogens](#) in the air and on the surfaces of aircraft cabins, galleys, lavatories and flight decks. The robot also will be used in Avelo's space in airport terminals.

"We are excited to be on the leading edge of helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses among the flying public," Andrew Levy, Avelo's chairman and chief executive, said. "RAY is safer, faster, more cost-effective and [a] more sustainable solution than the conventional chemical-based manual disinfection process used by most [airlines](#)."

The [robot](#) can be operated remotely by one flight crew member, far faster than manually-operated sanitizing equipment.

Bloomberg Businessweek reported that the Aero HygenX also has provided the robots to the Deutsche Lufthansa airline.

With no worldwide rules on sanitizing aircraft, airlines, Bloomberg reported, have adopted a patchwork of disinfecting measures, from spraying chemicals on surfaces to manually operated units that use ultraviolet light.

Avelo now offers service from Tweed-New Haven to six destinations in Florida, and in early May, will add service to Charleston and Myrtle Beach, S.C., Nashville, TN, and Savannah, GA.

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