

# Your Legal Rights as a Sikh Traveler

- You are not allowed to be discriminated against solely on the basis of being a Sikh or based solely on an appearance or dress that is associated with our religion and/or culture.
  - For example, selecting a man for an inspection solely because he is wearing a long beard or turban is unlawful discrimination, violating state and federal statutes and constitutional principles.
  - As a Sikh woman, you have the same rights with respect to your hair covering as a Sikh man has with his turban.
  - The authorities may search you in the same manner in which they search other passengers. That is, if they are requiring all passengers to disrobe, or if they are “randomly” searching passengers without regard to their appearance alone.

*Source: Norman Strickman, US Department of Transportation, Office of the General Counsel, email to Aviation Industry, September 21, 2001*

- You or your property are not to be inspected, searched, detained and/or denied transportation services solely because you are a Sikh, speak Punjabi, wear a Turban, or wear Punjabi clothing.

*Source: Carrying Out Transportation Inspection and Safety Responsibilities in a Nondiscriminatory Manner, email from DOT to Aviation Industry, October 16, 2001*

- If you trigger a metal detector and security asks you to remove your turban, ask first that they check you with a hand wand, and if necessary, to pat you down. You may request that this be done in a public or a private setting. If security refuses to respect this reasonable request, ask to speak to a supervisor.

*Source: Carrying Out Transportation Inspection and Safety Responsibilities in a Nondiscriminatory Manner, email from DOT to Aviation Industry, October 16, 2001*

- If a search or inspection is necessary for safety or security reasons, you must be provided with the choice of a public or private inspection. You must be given the opportunity to replace your clothing in a private area.

*Source: Carrying Out Transportation Inspection and Safety Responsibilities in a Nondiscriminatory Manner, email from DOT to Aviation Industry, October 16, 2001*

- You have the right to be treated with respect and in a polite, respectful and friendly manner, just as the other travelers expect to be treated.

*Source: Carrying Out Transportation Inspection and Safety Responsibilities in a Nondiscriminatory Manner, email from DOT to Aviation Industry, October 16, 2001*

- You have the right to have your questions answered in a straight, forward, honest manner.

*Source: Carrying Out Transportation Inspection and Safety Responsibilities in a Nondiscriminatory Manner, email from DOT to Aviation Industry, October 16, 2001*

- You should pack your kirpan in checked baggage, and not attempt to carry it on your person or in your carry-on luggage, because having a kirpan in the airplane cabin violates current regulations.

**REMEMBER: Stay calm and polite.** If you believe your rights have been violated, take down the names of the people violating them, the time, and the names of any witnesses willing to step forward. Once you get to a safe place, report the incident to the Sikh Communications Council by calling 650-473-9272 and leaving detailed information including your contact information. You may also wish to consider contacting your local bar association for legal assistance concerning your rights.

To support these educational efforts, write to:

Sikh Communications Council  
405 El Camino Real, #205  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

[www.SikhCommunications.com](http://www.SikhCommunications.com)

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