



# Patron Screening Best Practices Guide

Commercial Facilities Sector-Specific Agency

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**Homeland  
Security**

# Patron Screening Best Practices Guide

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## Preface

The *Patron Screening Best Practices Guide* provides options for consideration when developing and implementing patron screening procedures for major sporting events, concerts, horse races, award ceremonies, and similar gatherings. This Guide is the third installment of a three-part series that includes the *Sports Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide* (2012) and the *Sports Venue Credentialing Guide* (2012), and was completed in collaboration with the Commercial Facilities Sector Coordinating Council (SCC). In particular, the following Commercial Facilities subsectors were instrumental in its development:

- Sports Leagues
- Public Assembly
- Outdoor Events
- Lodging
- Real Estate

The patron screening procedures explained in this document are for guidance purposes only; they are not a requirement under any regulation or legislation. Due to the wide variety of venue sizes, locations, and events, not all suggested procedures will be relevant or applicable to each facility. In addition, venue owners, operators, and event organizers are encouraged to use additional resources (e.g., law enforcement, legal counsel, etc.) to implement the procedures outlined in this Guide.

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## Introduction

The Commercial Facilities Sector is widely diverse in both scope and function, and includes assets where large numbers of people congregate. These places of mass gathering include stadiums, arenas, cultural properties, commercial office buildings, outdoor venues and events, and more. These assets remain attractive targets for terrorist attacks or exploitation; therefore, many of these venues employ patron screening to enhance the safety and security of their guests.

## 1 Purpose

The purpose for establishing patron screening procedures is to control prohibited items being brought into a venue. Patron screening procedures should be a part of a venue's overall security plan. The security plan procedures should be tested and evaluated and conform with any Federal, State, and local public jurisdiction access requirements. Screening procedures should:

- Outline how to conduct a proper patron screening;
- Describe how to interact with individuals being searched;
- State how to identify prohibited items during the screening; and
- Describe how to respond to items discovered during the screening.

## 2 General

Venues should require screening for everyone entering the facility during event preparations and the event. This would include employees, contractors, teams/performers, concessionaires, suppliers, media and official patrons, and general ticket holders. To assure identification of and appropriate response to items not permitted in the venue, trained screening staff and supervisors should perform patron screening in a safe and respectful manner.

<b>GATE ADMISSION</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE ALLOWED IN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fans are allowed to bring in one (1) soft-sided bag/cooler, no larger than 6"x6"x12". <b>STRICTLY ENFORCED</b></li><li>• Fans are also allowed to bring in one (1) clear plastic souvenir bag, no larger than 18"x18"x4". (Not allowed to contain ice; please keep ice in cooler.)</li><li>• <b>NOTE</b>—Fans are only allowed to bring one of each of the bags described above and those bags are subject to inspection by security officials.</li><li>• No strollers, chairs, wagons, bicycles, roller blades, skateboards, pets (unless legally registered aid pets), umbrellas, large back packs, large bags, and/or large camera bags will be allowed through the admission gates (bags must be smaller than 6"x6"x12"). <b>STRICTLY ENFORCED</b></li><li>• No ice other than in a soft-sided cooler will be allowed through the admission gates. No glass bottles/containers allowed.</li></ul>

TABLE 1.—Sample text for a prohibited items list. (Text courtesy of Major League Baseball (MLB))

### 2.1 Screening Requirements

- The level of search detail will depend on the threat to the venue as determined by the venue's security manager or appropriate venue representative.
- Everyone who enters the venue is subject to search for prohibited items.
- Venue employees, contractors, and event staff should be trained in patron screening procedures and have knowledge of items prohibited during non-event and event days.

- Venue management should compile and post prohibited items lists to provide consistency for employees.
- Venues should implement a random screening program when they cannot screen all patrons (see [Section 12](#)).
- The venue's screening procedures should align with procedures recommended by law enforcement.



## 3 Public Awareness, Consent, and Right to Refuse

Informing patrons as early as possible that security screening procedures are in place and certain items are prohibited is an important part of a screening plan. This will aid in the screening process and allow patrons to schedule their arrival appropriately.

### 3.1 Public Awareness

Screening of patrons is voluntary. However, venues should make patrons aware, prior to purchase, that they will be searched before entering the venue and failure to allow screening will result in denial of entry. This language must be clearly stated and made available through a robust public awareness program. By improving a patron's understanding of security requirements, venues can reduce the amount of time patrons spend at checkpoints.

#### 3.1.1 Public Awareness Tools

Consider using these communications methods as part of an entry screening awareness campaign to educate patrons:

- **Signs:** Signs that explain which items are prohibited in the facility will reduce patron confusion and expedite entry. Signs can also communicate that the screening process is in effect to prepare patrons for screening.
- **Websites:** Posting screening requirements on public websites will help ensure patrons are aware of screening procedures before they arrive at a facility.
- **Tickets:** Messaging on tickets can state, "All patrons are subject to search."
- **Periodic Announcements:** Announcements made over public address systems or by greeters can inform patrons of basic security procedures and which items are restricted or prohibited.
- **Social Media:** Use social media pages, such as those for the venue and performers or sports teams, to raise awareness about entry screening.

### 3.2 Refusal of Patron Screening/Consent to Search

If a patron refuses to comply with established screening procedures, the screener should contact the checkpoint supervisor. The supervisor can communicate that screening is required for entry. This process should be conducted in a courteous, professional, and non-confrontational manner. While waiting for the supervisor to arrive, the screener should politely ask the patron to stand aside from the screening line to allow others to pass. An exit lane should be available to give patrons who do not wish to be searched a way to leave the venue.

## 4 Addressing Adverse Mindset and Threatening Statements

Communications materials that list answers for frequently asked questions (FAQs) can provide patrons with general screening requirements and official answers to common questions. These materials should have consistent messaging to support the screening process.

Each screener should rehearse these responses as part of their training program. Rehearsals will prepare the screener to address patrons' concerns with confidence and courtesy and will also help to diffuse any negative interactions with patrons. It is not unusual for some patrons to become impatient while waiting to enter a venue. Those responsible for conducting patron screening should receive training on how to maintain control at screening locations while also performing their screening responsibilities.

**Patrons making threatening statements** (e.g., "I have a bomb,") should be taken seriously. The screener should be certain of what was said by asking the patron to repeat the statement if necessary. The patron should also be informed that their statements are being taken seriously. The screener should immediately notify event security, supervisors, and law enforcement of such statements, as vocalized threats may be a crime in certain jurisdictions.

## 5 Item Descriptions

Items that are not permitted in the venue can be categorized as illegal, prohibited, and suspicious:

- **Illegal items** are any items that are illegal at the city, county, State, and Federal level and are therefore prohibited in the venue (e.g., explosives, narcotics, or drug paraphernalia).
- **Prohibited items** are items that may be legal to possess outside of the venue, but are specifically prohibited within the venue either because of the item itself, its size, or its function (e.g., firearms or knives, glass bottles, alcohol, hard coolers, umbrellas, backpacks and multi-pocketed bags over a specified size, pepper spray containers, or air horns). The venue selects prohibited items for safety, event experience, and contractual reasons. The venue’s policy should consider when exceptions to the prohibited items list may be made for medical reasons (e.g., syringes, inhalers, etc.).
- **Suspicious items** are items that are generally not on the prohibited items list or illegal within the venue, but may be considered suspicious due to the quantity of the item or the uniqueness of the item (e.g., a large roll of wire, a large quantity of batteries, a screwdriver, an alarm clock, an odd smelling item, or a large amount of merchandise from a sporting goods store).



FIGURE 1.—Suspicious items. (Courtesy of DHS)

The venue should prepare a list of illegal and prohibited items and distribute this list to employees, contractors, event staff, and ticket holders. Screening procedures should specifically state which items should be temporarily stored or surrendered to enable the patron to enter the venue. Patron screening is risk-based and intelligence-driven. It should occur at a level of detail commensurate with the threat associated with the event being hosted, a patron’s prior history, etc.

## 5.1 Suspicious Items

Screeners should look for suspicious items that could be assembled into a harmful device. These items may look safe individually and may be carried by one individual or by multiple patrons. Malicious actors could also combine suspicious items with other items already inside a venue (e.g., disassembled gun parts, electrical tape, crimpers, or wire cutters). Suspicious items could be used to produce an illegal item, improvised explosive devices, or other weapons. A good general principle is that suspicious items usually seem out of place in possession of the patron entering the venue.

## 5.2 Illegal and Prohibited Items

A screening system that uses fixed location and floating screeners will aid in the identification and removal of illegal and prohibited items. Fixed screeners at a checkpoint can identify illegal or prohibited items. If they identify any suspicious or prohibited items, floating screeners that rotate through checkpoints can escort the patron and the item(s) to the patron screening supervisor and law enforcement, if appropriate. The supervisor or law enforcement will aid in the final disposition of the item(s) (e.g., return to patron's vehicle, placement in a temporary storage area, or confiscation by law enforcement). Patrons with suspicious items should not be allowed into the venue, and should be monitored by event staff for any suspicious activity (e.g., passing the item off to another person or deliberately placing or leaving the item behind).

## 5.3 Considerations for Personnel

Personnel may need to have separate education or accommodations than general patrons:

- Some items that personnel are allowed to bring into a venue during non-event days may not be permitted during an event (e.g., knives, mace, alcohol, etc.). A list of these items should be posted at personnel entrances.
- Personnel should have a secure storage space to leave items (i.e., umbrellas, bags, etc.) that are not permitted in the venue.
- All entrances that non-event or administrative office personnel routinely use to enter and exit the venue should have screening stations.
- Facilities may also want to screen personnel as they exit the venue to prevent theft or to control event-related items.

### **BEST PRACTICE: Armed Off-Duty Law Enforcement Officers**

If a facility allows armed off-duty law enforcement officers into the venue, these practices can help utilize their presence:

- Have the officers check into a central location for accountability.
- Identify each officer's seat location for security purposes.
- Give the officers identifiable bracelets to wear so on-duty officers are aware of their status as an armed law enforcement officer.
- Establish a formal credential guideline for officers.

## 6 Patron Flow Rate

Each venue must decide what procedures and protocols they will use to provide an acceptable level of security while also maintaining a quality visitor experience. A major factor in this effort is determining the venue's acceptable throughput of ticket holders, or "patron flow rate." Independent of what screening procedures are used, venues should conduct an analysis to determine what the average wait time is for a patron entering the security queue. This can calculate how long it takes patrons to make it through security at different times (e.g., prior to the start of an event, during an event, etc.).

Depending on event demographics and location, venues may have different acceptable wait times for patrons to clear security. To help determine how many patrons can clear security within a certain time frame, venues can use a patron flow rate formula.

### **BEST PRACTICE: Patron Flow Rate Formula**

Conduct an analysis to determine the quantity of patrons searched in a block of time.

- Example 1: It takes 16 seconds to use a hand held metal detector (HHMD) on one patron.  
 $60 \text{ seconds} \div 16 \text{ seconds} = 3.75 \text{ patrons searched per minute}$   
 $3.75 \times 60 \text{ minutes} = 225 \text{ patrons searched in 1 hour}$
- Example 2: It takes 9 seconds to use a walk through metal detector (WTMD) on one patron.  
 $60 \text{ seconds} \div 9 \text{ seconds} = 6.67 \text{ patrons searched per minute}$   
 $6.67 \times 60 \text{ minutes} = 400 \text{ patrons searched in 1 hour}$

Here are the general formulas:

- $\text{Total time period} \div \text{actual search time} = \# \text{ patrons searched per total time period}$
- $\# \text{ patrons searched per time period} \times \text{time block} = \# \text{ patrons searched per time block}$

## 7 Conducting Patron Screening

Patron screeners should consider the following:

- Screeners should always greet the patron, make eye contact, and remain courteous.
- The patron should be asked whether it is okay to be searched. If patrons refuse, they should be informed of the screening policy. If they still refuse, they should be directed away from the venue via a separate exit line.
- The screener should ask if the patron has removed all metal objects before the search begins.
- Screening should be conducted by a same gender screener in case physical contact of sensitive areas needs to occur.
- Screeners must be extremely cautious when placing their hands near sensitive areas on the patron. Screeners should use the back of their hand when searching these areas.

### 7.1 Screening Procedures for Special Needs Patrons

Screening procedures should be in place to address special needs patrons. Inspection of individuals in wheelchairs or bags belonging to the visually impaired may require special treatment, such as describing the actual screening process as it occurs to a visually impaired patron. Preprinted cards outlining the screening procedures should be available for the hearing impaired.

### 7.2 Patron Screening Equipment

Regardless of the location of a security checkpoint and screening area, particular items are needed for staff to safely conduct a proper search. The following is a list of items that should be available to screening staff at all locations:

- Disposable rubber or latex gloves in appropriate sizes.
- Flashlight, regardless of time of day.
- Containers/bins to confine and sort items if they must be removed from a package or bag.
- A template/bin to illustrate permissible bag size.
- Communication equipment, such as cell phones and radios, with instructions on when to use or not use them, depending on the items discovered during screening.

## 8 Walk Through Metal Detectors

Walk through metal detectors (WTMDs) are an option for patron screening. They allow facilities to screen patrons quickly and effectively, while maintaining a level of efficiency that ensures a high throughput rate. WTMDs fall into two categories: single zone detection and multi-zone detection.



FIGURE 2.—Walk through metal detectors. (Courtesy of DHS)

- Single zone WTMDs will identify an anomaly; however, it does not narrow down the location of the alarm annunciation on the patron.
- Multi-zone WTMDs have multiple transmit and receive indicators, quickly allowing the screener to assess where the alarm annunciation is generating from (e.g., left side vs. right side, head vs. feet, etc.) and to ask if the patron has anything metallic in that general location.

### 8.1 Location Needs

Venues should ensure that the locations selected for WTMD use are well lit, covered from the rain (if not possible, consider weather resistant units), and have sufficient power supplies to operate the amount of WTMDs needed for that location.

- Place WTMD locations outside of the ticket receiving location, when possible, to increase standoff distance and to ensure that only security cleared patrons are approaching the ticket gate.
- Establish a local procedure that determines how many attempts patrons are permitted to pass through the WTMD prior to being sent to secondary screening.



## 8.2 Testing and Documentation

Testing and documenting WTMDs to ensure they are properly operating is a critical component of a localized security plan. This allows security administrators to verify that the equipment has been properly installed and maintained.

- Use the manufacturer's instruction manual procedures to test the WTMD to ensure it is operating within its specifications.
- Test the WTMD daily to ensure operability and determine if routine or other maintenance is required.
- Determine other times the WTMD requires testing onsite (after restoration of power loss, before an event, after sensitivity adjustment, etc.) and incorporate them into the testing plan.
- Ensure the sensitivity levels of the WTMD are set to address localized risk-based and intelligence-driven concerns.
- Record testing and maintenance in a log that describes the results of the testing (pass/fail), what parts were ordered, what maintenance was performed, etc. Create a unique log for each piece of equipment and maintain the log locally for the lifecycle of the WTMD.

## 8.3 Divesting Items

Divesting items that would cause the WTMD to alarm will aid in the flow of patrons through the security checkpoint.

- Post signs that identify a metal detector is in use, and that patrons should be prepared to remove items such as watches, belts, phones, change, or other objects that cause false alarms. Also consider posting in other languages as necessary.
- Provide a table with a basket/tray next to the WTMD for patrons to place metal objects. Alternatively, patron belongings may be placed into a plastic bag that the patron can carry with them past the screening point. This facilitates faster entry into the venue.
- Ensure that patrons are able to maintain visible contact with their personal belongings during screening, and that items placed in the basket/tray are visually inspected for illegal, prohibited, or suspicious items.

## 8.4 Operational Procedures

Venues should standardize operational procedures for each WTMD location, allowing operators to work at any location without needing to learn different pieces of equipment at different gates. Once the patron has removed any objects that would cause an alarm, operators should:

- Stand in a location where they can see and hear the WTMD alarm.
- Stand approximately two feet from the WTMD, allowing patrons to get through the WTMD, but maintaining control of the flow of visitors.
- Look directly at the visitor and verbally ask, “Have you removed all metallic items (cell phones, keys, coins, anything in a foil wrapper, etc.) from your person?”
- Indicate when the patron is to proceed through the WTMD and maintain control of the line.
- Do not allow patrons to run, jump, shuffle their feet, or piggyback through the WTMD. If they do, direct them to step back and walk through again using their normal stride.
- Rescreen any areas on a patron that have set off the alarm. If there is another alarm, consider the use of a secondary screening station. This will assist in reducing entry delays for other patrons.
- Allow patrons to gather their personal belongings and move to the ticketing location if there is no alarm.
- Do not allow other patrons to move ahead of each other in case multiple alarms are received on several patrons.
- Ensure patrons enter the WTMD at the same time as their personal belongings to avoid theft of items.
- Stop the flow of passage through the WTMD if a lingering crowd develops. *(Remember—the operator controls the flow of visitors.)*
- Observe patrons closely. If any unusual bulges, draping of fabric, or extremely baggy or loose clothing are seen, send the person to secondary screening.

## 8.5 Secondary Screening Procedures

Secondary screening procedures should be in place for individuals who:

- Set off WTMD alarms and cannot find anything further to divest.
- Have a medical situation (e.g., pregnancy) or implant (e.g., pacemaker, defibrillator, bone stimulator, etc.) and should not go through the WTMD. *(Ultimately, the choice to reject passage through a WTMD because of health concerns should be left up to the patron.)*
- Are in a wheelchair and cannot walk unassisted.
- Have a prosthetic limb and its removal would be inappropriate.
- Are pushing baby strollers.
- Do not speak any of the languages spoken at the checkpoint.
- Cannot fit through the WTMD.
- State they do not want to go through the WTMD.

## 9 Hand Held Metal Detectors

A hand held metal detector (HHMD) is another general screening device that can be used as either the primary or secondary screening tool. If used as the primary tool, one of the most effective methods is to conduct a pat-down as the secondary search. Generally, HHMDs become an alternate screening device if a patron has set off a WTMD alarm and the operator has not been able to resolve the source of the alarm.



FIGURE 3.—Hand held metal detector. (Courtesy of DHS)

### 9.1 Testing

Testing the HHMDs to ensure they are properly operating is a critical component of a venue's security plan. It also ensures security administrators can verify the equipment is properly maintained.

- Train screeners and have a local instruction manual at each checkpoint that demonstrates the detection areas for the HHMDs being used. Though detection areas are slightly different for different models of HHMDs, they are approximately in the middle of the wand device, minus the handle and tip. Also, HHMDs have areas that do not detect the presence of metal.
- As a practice, have screeners practice with HHMDs to ensure they are familiar with the limitations of the device.

- HHMDs are battery operated tools with a battery life ranging from 8 to 30 hours, depending on the device. Checkpoints should have additional batteries in case of battery failure.

## 9.2 Operational Procedures

Operational procedures should be standardized for each different type of HHMD in use. Checkpoints should have a basic instruction manual for each HHMD available for operators to review if they are unfamiliar with a device. Once the patron has removed any bulky outer garments (i.e., large coats) and hats that may interfere with the screening and metal objects that would cause an alarm, operators should complete the following steps:

### 9.2.1 Initial Steps

- Greet the patron courteously and advise the patron that he or she will be screened with the HHMD. Ask the patron to divest all metal items.
- Instruct the patron to stand with his or her feet shoulder width apart, arms outstretched, and palms facing up and open.
- Divide the body screening process in half vertically. Starting at the top right shoulder area, or where clothing is visible on the torso, hold the HHMD one to two inches from the person and move the hand wand over each side as follows (see Figure 4 below):
  - Screen the patron with the HHMD starting in front of the person at the top of the head. Move the wand down the shoulder and out to the arm and wrist;
  - Ensure that that patron's hand is open and visually check that he or she is not holding anything;
  - Move the wand down the outside of the torso, to the waist, down the outside of the leg to the clothing line; and
  - Use the wand to screen the inside of the leg to the groin area, and down the opposite leg to the clothing line.

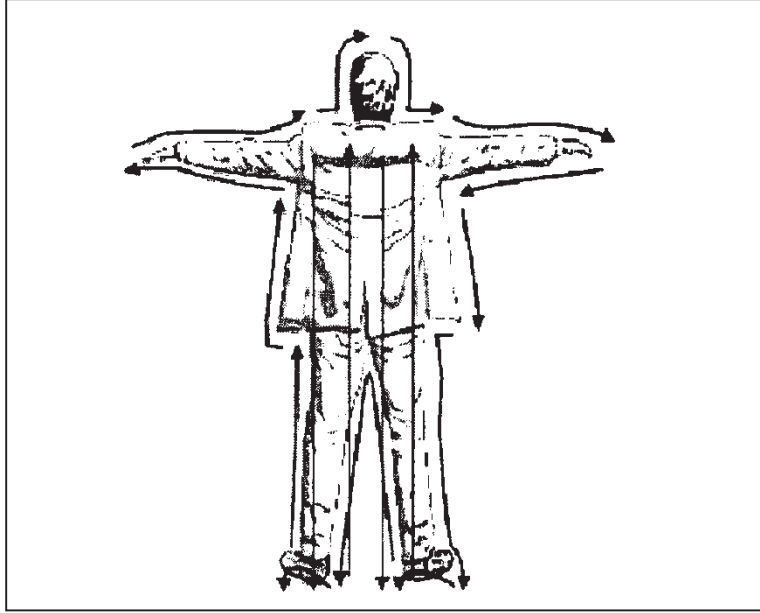


FIGURE 4.—Hand held metal detector anatomical position for screening. (Courtesy of DHS)

### 9.2.2 Front Screening Process

- Stand in front of the person.
- Use one motion and move the wand in front of the arm, the front of the shoulder area, chest area, abdominal area, and in front of the leg, down the shin to the foot (use a systematic procedure on each side).
- Use the wand to screen the front of the arms, chest area, lower abdominal area, and the front of the legs.
- Pass the wand over the top of the foot.
- If the alarm sounds, stop screening and proceed with a limited pat-down of the area in question. Then rescreen the area again to make sure it is clear.

### 9.2.3 Clearing the Waistline

- If the HHMD sounds the alarm, have the patron open and hold the belt buckle and end of belt apart.
- Physically inspect the belt buckle to ensure it is not concealing a weapon.
- With the buckle and end of the belt separated, rescreen the area.
- If the alarm sounds again, physically inspect the waistline using limited pat-down procedures.

#### **9.2.4 Clearing the Groin Area of a Person Wearing a Skirt, Dress, Kilt, or Similar Garment**

- To screen the leg and groin areas, ask the patron to stand with one foot extended forward as if he or she were taking a step. This position should provide sufficient surface area to move the hand wand inside both legs, including reasonable close proximity to the groin area.
- Continue to move the wand on the outside of the opposite leg, up the waist to the torso, and the underside of the arm to the wrist.
- Ensure that that patron’s hand is open and visually check that he or she is not holding anything.
- If the alarm sounds, stop screening and proceed with a limited pat-down (see [Section 10](#)) of the area that set off the alarm. Rescreen the area again to make sure it is clear.

#### **9.2.5 Back Screening Process**

- Use one motion with the wand and screen the back of the arm, the back of the shoulder, back area, buttocks, and the back of leg down to the foot. Overlap the vertical imaginary line dividing the body.
- Use the wand to screen the back of the arm, the back area, buttocks, and the back of the leg along the bottom. Continue screening up the back of the leg to the calf and around the sole area of the foot.
- If the alarm sounds, stop screening and proceed with a limited pat-down of the area that set off the alarm. Then rescreen that area again to make sure it is clear.
- All alarms should be resolved as they occur. If the alarm sounds again, the area should be patted down. Inform the individual that a pat-down must be conducted of the area where the alarm occurred. Offer a private location for pat-down screening of sensitive areas.
- Finding one prohibited object does not mean that it is the only prohibited item. Continue using the wand to screen the entire person—outline, front, and back. Rescreen or pat-down areas where an item has been removed, as there may be more than one cause for the alarm.
- If the person being screened by the HHMD is holding a child, make sure that the child is screened too.
- If a person refuses to be screened by any means, follow local procedures. Generally, a screener would notify their supervisor and/or law enforcement personnel when a patron refuses to undergo screening. Patrons who refuse screening must be denied entry.
- As a best practice, there should always be a person of the same gender available to conduct screenings. If a patron does not want to be screened by the hand wand, contact the area supervisor (follow local protocol).

## 9.2.6 U-Shaped Screening Technique

- The U-shaped screening technique provides an alternative screening method that allows for a faster patron flow rate and considers space limitations.
- Operators should complete the following steps (see Figure 5 below):
  - Greet the patron, and advise the patron that he or she will be screened with the HHMD.
  - Instruct the patron to remove all metal from his or her pockets and hold the items at shoulder height with elbows at his or her sides. Inspect the items in the patron's hands.
  - Instruct the patron to stand with their feet shoulder width apart.
  - Screen the patron with the HHMD starting in front of the person at the top right shoulder area. Move the wand down the front of the patron to the right foot, moving to the left foot, then bringing the wand up to the top left shoulder area in a U-shaped motion.
  - Instruct the patron to turn around, then repeat the U-shaped motion.
  - If the alarm sounds, stop screening and proceed with a limited pat-down of the area in question. Then rescreen the area again to make sure it is clear.

**G**reet each guest, smile, and make eye contact.

**U**nderstand the scanner and know how to use it. It will only detect items containing metal.

**A**sk guests to remove all metal from their pockets and hold the items at shoulder height with elbows at their sides. Their feet should be shoulder width apart.

**R**epeat the same “U” pattern each time. Maintain the scanner 6 inches from the guest, ensuring it extends beyond each side of the body. Large guests may require a third pass to cover their center section.

**D**etermine the source of each “alert.” Scan the area a second time to be sure it is clear.

**I**nspect the items in the guest’s hands and anything unusual, including suspicious bulges.

**T**hank the guest and encourage him or her to enjoy the event.

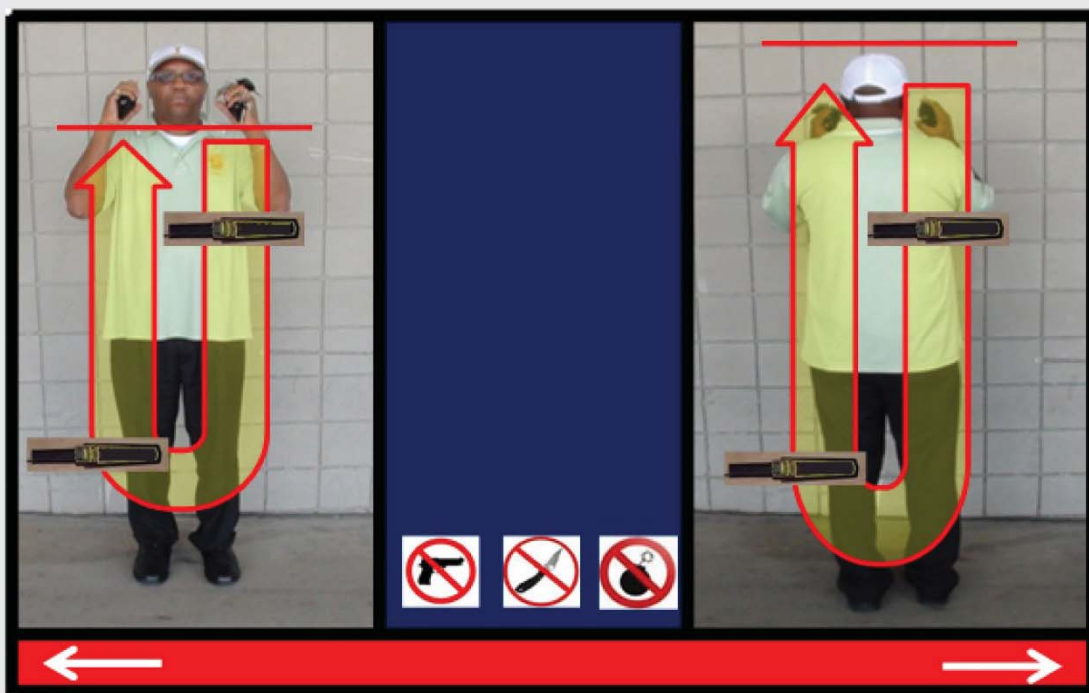


FIGURE 5.—Hand held metal detector “U” pattern position for screening. (Courtesy of DHS)



## 10 Physical Searches

There are several instances when a physical search of a patron is appropriate or necessary:

- To resolve metal detector alarms;
- If metal detectors (walk through or hand held) are not available or operational;
- If a patron refuses or is unable (for medical or physical reasons) to be screened with metal detectors;
- If standard operating procedures (SOPs) call for random secondary screening as an additional deterrent; and
- If patrons display suspicious anomalies in clothing or behavior.

There are two types of physical search of patrons: full body and limited body.

A **full body search** is generally used when metal detectors are not available, the person is unwilling or unable to be screened by metal detectors, and when there is a suspicion of threat. **These types of searches/pat-downs should be used with the full permission of the organization or legal department.**

A **limited body search** is generally used to resolve metal detector alarms or to search parts of a body that present a suspicion of threat (e.g., bulky clothes, protruding items).

### 10.1 General Technique

- Use the **front** of your hands—fingers and palms—when conducting physical searches in non-sensitive areas. Always use the **back** of the hand when conducting a pat-down of sensitive areas (chest area for women and lower abdominal area for men and women).
- Use a sliding motion that applies enough pressure to detect prohibited items.
- Use an overlapping sliding motion to ensure complete coverage.
- Always look at the area being searched for prohibited items that may be concealed or become dislodged during the search. Watches and jewelry can be searched visually.
- If the head area cannot be cleared visually, conduct a physical search through a patting not sliding motion.
- It is generally not a good idea to separate family members, especially if the search is conducted on a minor traveling with an adult. Allow the adult to be present during the screening.
- If your location provides gloves, use new ones for each physical search.

## 10.2 Before Beginning a Physical Search

- It is generally good to advise the patron of the need for additional physical screening. It might be less important in a situation where everyone is physically searched.
- Explain the process of the actual physical search. Advise the patron that the process involves touching sensitive areas, and that the screener will be careful.
- Offer a private area to perform the search if it is requested.
- Observe the patron and determine if there is anything obvious that he or she needs to divest (e.g., belts, coins, wallets, and jackets).
- Before beginning the physical search, it is a good idea to ask the patron if he or she has any sensitive or painful areas or is wearing an external medical device. Use caution and the lightest pressure possible when screening those areas.
- Instruct the patron to stand with feet apart at shoulder width and with his or her arms extended, hands open, and palms up.

## 10.3 When Conducting the Search

- Whether beginning with a front or back search, begin with the collar areas by pressing the collar between thumb and forefinger and sliding from one side to the other. If the collar is too tight and the pressing of the collar could pinch, use the fingertips of the hand to press the collar.
- Search the arms using a sliding motion beginning at the armpit and sliding toward the wrist. Repeat as many times as needed to conduct a thorough search.
- Search the torso using one or two hands. Begin at the shoulders and continue to the waist. Be sure to search both sides of the torso.
- Search the waistline by pressing it between thumb and forefingers. If the patron has clothes that cover the waistline, ask him or her to raise it. Search by sliding your hands from one side to the other. If the waistline is too tight to conduct a thorough search, slide the outside of the waistline with the front of the hand to avoid pinching the patron.
- If the patron is wearing loose-fitting clothes, ask him or her to tighten the clothes by pulling up to improve screening of the buttocks. Use the back of the hand to search the buttocks from top to bottom.
- Use the front of the hands in a sliding motion from top to bottom. Search the sides and back of both legs.
- When complete with either the front or back search, instruct the patron to lower his or her arms. Have the patron turn around and raise his or her arms again. Then begin the other side.

If at any time during the search the screener detects what appears to be a weapon or other prohibited item, he or she should follow the local SOPs to resolution procedures.

If no suspicious or prohibited items are discovered during the search, the screener should thank the patron and instruct the patron to lower his or her arms and to proceed to the secure area.

A **limited physical search** should follow the same procedure as a full-body search, but it is confined to a smaller area of the body. It is usually conducted to resolve an alarm or as additional screening. Additional screening can be random or based on suspicion.

#### **10.4 Opposite Gender Screening**

A checkpoint should have enough screeners of both genders to conduct same-gender physical search. If the local SOPs allows for opposite gender screening, consider the following:

- There must be a shortage of screeners of the specific gender.
- The patron must be informed that there is no screener of the gender that the patron states himself/herself to be.
- The patron is advised that a screener of the opposite gender will conduct the screening, which may include physical contact.
- The patron consents to screening by a screener of the opposite gender. If the patron does not consent, he or she should be allowed to leave the venue.
- A readily available private space, such as an office, should be available for screening by someone of the same gender as the patron, or the screening should be performed in the presence of supervisor or other authority figure.

## 11 Special Considerations

### 11.1 Headwear

Headwear should be removed if possible. If the patron does not remove the headwear for inspection, the screener can feel the headwear for possible threats. In some instances, patrons may be allowed to press the headwear themselves and the screener will observe for possible threats.

### 11.2 Face Covering

If an individual is wearing a face covering for religious purposes, explain the need to remove the covering for security purposes. Offer a private area if available.

### 11.3 Sensitive Body Areas and Piercings

Some HHMD or WTMD alarms may occur in sensitive body areas due to body piercings or other reasons. It is a best practice to have a private search area available, and to use the back of the hand when conducting a pat-down of sensitive areas.

### 11.4 Infants

Use the hand wand only when necessary to resolve an alarm.

### 11.5 Animals

Service animals are required to be screened. Determine locally what method is best for conducting the search. The screener should ask permission to search the service animal and the patron. The animal should be clearly identified as a service animal, and must have verification paperwork (typically in the vest pocket attached to the animal). **It is illegal to ask a patron, “What is your disability?”**

## 12 Random Screening

To ensure that owners and operators do not subject themselves to allegations of discrimination or harassment, it is important to note that random checks are not based on probable cause, but are instead based on the venue's authority to protect its property and patrons and to prevent criminal activity while onsite. Venues may direct or establish procedures for random checks of selected individuals entering or leaving a facility under their purview, but it is essential that local screeners have no involvement in determining which patrons to screen (thereby eliminating possibility of profiling).

The site security manager determines the selection of patrons on a random basis. Venues may use an impersonal, computer-generated product formula, such as every other patron, every tenth patron, etc. The number and frequency of the patrons checked does not affect their randomness. Thus, a check is random even if it includes every person that enters or leaves the facility during a selected period.

Do not use random checks as a ploy to check a particular suspect. Such action could be illegal and may subject the involved screener to penalties. It is recommended that venues use a computer-generated product to randomly select times and places for facility entry checks.

If illegal, prohibited, or suspicious items are discovered during the course of searching a patron at an entry security checkpoint, immediately stop the search and notify the local supervisor.

## BEST PRACTICE: Random Entry Security Checkpoint Program

These checks allow venues to maintain operational flexibility and vigilance, while not showing patterns to possible surveillance. Venues should:

- Establish a random program.
- Identify gates, times, and number of patrons to be screened.
- Use a computer-generated product similar to the example below.

<b>EXAMPLE: FACILITY X RANDOM ENTRY POINT PROGRAM</b>			
<b>Gate Location</b>	1	2	3
<b>Initiation Time</b>	12:06:55 PM	11:02:41 AM	11:12:55 AM
<b>Every # of Guests</b>	21	18	11
<b>Terminate Search After</b>	29	22	46

TABLE 2.—Example facility entry point program. (Courtesy of DHS)

(RANDBETWEEN = Gets the random integer [number] between two values)

Initiation Time = RANDBETWEEN (TIME(x, 0, 0)\*10000, TIME(y, 0, 0)\*10000)/10000

x = block start time (9 for 9:00 am)

y = block end time (14 for 2:00 pm)

Random time will be between 0900 and 1400.

Every # of guests = RANDBETWEEN(x, y)

x = block low end (i.e. 5)

y = block high end (i.e. 25)

Search block will be between every 5th and 25th guest.

Terminate Search After = RANDBETWEEN(x, y)

x = block low end (i.e. 20)

y = block high end (i.e. 50)

Search until number is reached.

## 13 Amnesty Boxes

Before patrons enter a facility, a venue should conduct a public awareness campaign to educate patrons about the venue's screening procedures and criteria for restricted items. However, there are times when these items are still brought to the screening location. If restricted items are brought to a venue:

- The patron should either return the item or bag to his or her vehicle, or be allowed to store the bag or item in a temporary storage area using a claim fee process.
- Depending on the type of venue (e.g., outdoor or indoor), the temporary storage area may be located outdoors away from the venue, or indoors in an area away from the event and the venue's operational systems.
- The type of items and bags allowed in this temporary storage area and the inspection of such items and bags should occur at the discretion of the venue and at a level of detail commensurate with the threat.

The venue management should coordinate with law enforcement to determine whether the use of an amnesty box is appropriate for the disposition of items voluntarily surrendered by ticket holders.

- Law enforcement personnel should dictate whether an amnesty box will be provided and whether they will be responsible for its use and contents.
- If a venue uses an amnesty box, the facility should ensure that all screeners are well trained on the policies and procedures associated with the use of the amnesty box and that this information is clearly communicated to ticket holders.

## 14 Findings

Venues should prepare simple procedures for event security staff when illegal, prohibited, or suspicious items (see [Section 5](#)) are discovered as a result of a patron screening. The disposition of the item and the level of law enforcement involvement will depend upon the category of item discovered and the presence of law enforcement at the venue.

### 14.1 Notify Supervisor/Law Enforcement

The venue's patron screening procedures should clearly define the actions that should be taken once an item from any of the three categories is discovered. Patron screeners should immediately notify supervisory staff, security staff responsible for the event, and law enforcement personnel (if on the premises) of the discovery of a suspect item. This notification process should consider:

- Providing verbal notification to supervisory staff, event security, and law enforcement in the quickest and least disruptive manner so as not to alarm others.
- Using radios to advise a supervisor about a prohibited item. A suspicious or unattended device should be handled differently. Depending on the item discovered, handheld radios or cellular phones should not be used because certain devices (e.g., improvised explosive devices) can be triggered by radio frequencies. (For minimum mandatory evacuation distances, please see the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-Department of Justice (DOJ) Bomb Threat Stand-Off Card. To request the card, contact the DHS Office for Bombing Prevention at [OBP@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:OBP@hq.dhs.gov).)
- Coordinate between patron screening locations around the venue to determine whether suspicious items have been identified that may complement or be used in some harmful way with other items discovered.

#### 14.1.1 Notification Procedures

- Do not leave the illegal, prohibited, or suspicious items unattended at the patron screening area when making a notification.
- Switch out the search staff that discovered the item with other search staff at the patron screening location in order to continue the simultaneous patron screening process of other ticket holders.
- Have event security relocate the item owner and the patron screener to a supervisory location to further investigate the discovered illegal, prohibited, or suspicious item.
- Remove unnecessary or high levels of attention toward the suspect bag/item(s).
- Monitor the activities of the owner of the suspicious item until the venue can determine the item does not pose a threat.
- Items venues need to investigate further should be retained by law enforcement officials for final disposition.



## 14.2 Item Handling Procedures

### 14.2.1 Illegal Items

The venue's patron screening procedures should specify that the discovery of illegal items should immediately prompt notification of supervisory staff, the security staff responsible for the event, and law enforcement.

- Notification procedures may vary depending on whether law enforcement is present at the venue.
- If law enforcement is present at the venue, they should determine the proper disposition of the illegal item(s).
- If law enforcement is offsite, event security staff should escort the patron with the illegal item(s) away from the patron screening area to a supervisory location until law enforcement arrives.
- At the discretion of law enforcement, the disposition of the illegal item(s) may be through the use of an amnesty box or through returning the item(s) to a location of the patron's choice away from the venue (e.g., temporary storage if available or the patron's vehicle).

### 14.2.2 Prohibited Items

Prohibited items should be specifically identified and itemized in a log by the venue staff. It is the responsibility of the venue's security staff and patron screeners' supervisory staff to properly dispose of those items.

- Options may include the use of an amnesty box, storage of the item(s) at a temporary storage facility, or returning the item(s) to the patron's vehicle.
- The venue's security staff should ensure that all prohibited items are disposed of properly and not left unattended or placed in the trash.

### 14.2.3 Suspicious Items

The disposition of suspicious items will depend on the item(s) discovered. For safety purposes, patron screening supervisory staff, event security, and law enforcement should be contacted when suspicious items are discovered.

- Coordinate between patron screening locations around the venue to determine whether suspicious items have been identified that may complement or be used in some harmful way with other items discovered.
- If it is determined, through observation or some suspicious activity on the part of the ticket owner of the suspicious item, that the item may be used to cause harm at the event, then it may be necessary to dispose of the item by using an amnesty box, storing the item at a temporary storage facility, or returning the item to the patron's vehicle.
- In some instances, law enforcement may confiscate suspicious items.

- If confiscated, the venue's security staff should ensure that all suspicious items are disposed of properly (e.g., temporary storage area or amnesty box) and not left unattended or placed in the trash.
- Venues should prohibit photography of the screening process.

### **14.3 Intervention by Law Enforcement**

Most patron screening situations will not call for the assistance of law enforcement; however, whenever available, law enforcement assistance should be considered.

- The venue's patron screening procedures should be developed in coordination with law enforcement and should align with procedures recommended by law enforcement officials.
- When onsite, uniformed law enforcement should be located between the patron screening locations and the ticket collection area. This positioning will allow the uniformed officer to observe the patron screening procedures and the in-processing of the patrons while still having an effective presence.
- When necessary, law enforcement should confiscate illegal or prohibited items not permitted in the venue.
- Some patrons may refuse to surrender items. During these situations, law enforcement personnel should be able to diffuse the situation and provide additional guidance and information to the patron regarding their property and the venue's patron screening procedures.
- If law enforcement is not located onsite, venue policy should consider how to handle illegal items in accordance with guidance provided by law enforcement officials.

### **14.4 Intervention by Venue Staff**

In the event that law enforcement is not available, patron screeners should practice extreme caution when dealing with suspect items.

- Patron screeners should remain calm at all times and present a professional demeanor with high regard for customer service.
- Efforts should be made immediately to contact supervisory personnel and the security staff responsible for the event; though not in a manner that will create unnecessary or high levels of attention toward the suspect bag/item(s).

## 15 Training

All venue personnel, regardless of position or job title, should have patron screening procedures awareness training. Venues should routinely train individuals who conduct patron screening in the procedures, equipment, item identification, and appropriate response when discovering items that fall into the three categories listed in [Section 5](#) (e.g., illegal, prohibited, and suspicious). As part of training exercises, restricted items may be intentionally placed in bags to assess patron screening effectiveness (depending on the event and number of ticket holders entering the venue). Training in customer relations and law enforcement protocol is also recommended so staff can respond appropriately to adverse reactions from a patron with a disallowed item.

### 15.1 Harmful Items or Substances

Training should include the identification of harmful substances (e.g., bomb-making materials) and other substances or items that pose a threat to personnel and staff. Examples of harmful items should be outlined in the venue's security plan with guidelines for identification, retention, transfer of ownership, and disposal, if applicable.

### 15.2 Crowd Interaction

In some instances, wait time to enter a venue can be significant because of the number of people entering and the amount of time it takes to perform a proper patron screening. Event staff and law enforcement working outside the patron screening area should be trained to interact with patrons to create a positive "wait" experience (e.g., by initiating upbeat conversations with patrons about the event, the sports teams participating, local issues, etc.). This interaction also affords the event staff and law enforcement an opportunity to indirectly question people who may appear suspicious. Due to their location within the outer perimeter of the venue, patron screeners should also be trained in suspicious behavior detection, potential coordinated attempts by patrons to circumnavigate venue security, and procedures to coordinate suspicious item identification between patron screening stations and the venue's command post.

### 15.3 Training Frequency

Patron screening procedures should be conducted by the venue staff and observed by supervisory staff prior to every event. Any deficiencies should be corrected prior to employees, patrons, media, or others entering the venue. Patron screening procedures may change for different events at the same venue; therefore, it is important to practice the appropriate patron screening procedures prior to each event.

## 15.4 Additional Resources

### 15.4.1 Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN)

Additional training resources may be found on the secure Homeland Security Information Network portal at <https://hsin.dhs.gov/>. If you are not currently a HSIN user, please send an email to [HSIN.Outreach@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:HSIN.Outreach@hq.dhs.gov) to request access to HSIN and include the information listed below.

- First and last name
- Valid email address
- Requested Community of Interest (For major sporting events, concerts, horse races, award ceremonies, and similar gatherings, the Community of Interest is “Commercial Facilities.”)
- Reason for access

### 15.4.2 “If You See Something, Say Something™”

“If You See Something, Say Something™” is a national campaign that raises public awareness of the indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime, as well as the importance of reporting suspicious activity to State and local law enforcement. Informed, alert communities play a critical role in keeping our nation safe. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to strengthening hometown security by creating partnerships with State, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments and the private sector, as well as the communities they serve. These partners help us reach the public across the nation by aligning their messaging with the campaign’s messages and distributing outreach materials, including Public Service Announcements (PSAs). To learn how you can become a partner, visit <http://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something/become-partner>.

### 15.4.3 Sports Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide

This guide provides suggestions for developing and implementing bag search procedures at sporting event venues. The purpose for establishing bag search procedures is to control items that are hand carried into the sports venue. For more information, please contact the Commercial Facilities Sector-Specific Agency at [CFSTeam@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CFSTeam@hq.dhs.gov).

#### **15.4.4 Check It!**

Designed to raise the level of awareness for front-line facility employees by highlighting the indicators of suspicious activity, this video provides information to help employees properly search bags in order to protect venues and patrons across the country. To view *Check It!* visit <http://www.dhs.gov/commercial-facilities-resources>.

#### **15.4.5 Sports Venue Credentialing Guide**

This guide provides suggestions for developing and implementing credentialing procedures at sporting event venues. The purpose for establishing a credentialing program is to control and restrict access to a sports venue and to provide venue management with information on those who have access. For more information, please contact the Commercial Facilities Sector-Specific Agency at [CFSTeam@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CFSTeam@hq.dhs.gov).

#### **15.4.6 Active Shooter Preparedness**

In many cases, there is no pattern or method to the selection of victims by an active shooter, and these situations, by their very nature, are unpredictable and evolve quickly. The Department of Homeland Security offers free courses, materials, and workshops to better prepare stakeholders to deal with an active shooter situation and to raise awareness of behaviors that represent pre-incident indicators and characteristics of active shooters. To learn more about active shooter preparedness, visit <http://www.dhs.gov/activeshooter>.

#### **15.4.7 Federal Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Management Institute**

Many free Federal training courses are available online through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Management Institute at <http://training.fema.gov/>.

For additional questions or to provide feedback pertaining to this document, please contact [CFSTeam@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CFSTeam@hq.dhs.gov).

## Appendix A: Acronyms and Definitions

Acronym	Definition
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
HHMD	Hand Held Metal Detector
HSIN	Homeland Security Information Network
MLB	Major League Baseball
PSA	Public Service Announcement
SCC	Sector Coordinating Council
SLTT	State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
WTMD	Walk Through Metal Detector