



March 1, 2021

Contact: Jeff Lea
314-793-4240
jeff.lea@mspmac.org

MSP Preparing for Spike in Travelers as Spring Break Travel Begins Travelers Urged to Do Their Part to Stay Safe



MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL – Fueled by spring break travel, March is expected to be the busiest month at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic one year ago.

Booking forecasts for March show MSP could see a few days peaking at more than 28,000 passengers going through its checkpoints, well over the current pandemic peak of nearly 22,000

checkpoint passengers in a day set in late December. Pre-pandemic, busy spring break travel days often saw 35,000 to 45,000 people passing through the airport's security checkpoints.

On average, 338 flights will depart MSP daily in March. That is 21 more average daily departures than in December, which was MSP's previous peak month for airline operations during the pandemic. March departures are still projected to be 34 percent below a year ago, in the early days of pandemic impacts on U.S. air travel.

As more take to the skies in the coming weeks, travelers should build in more time to get to the airport and to their gate. Travelers should arrive at the airport at least two hours in advance of a domestic flight or 2 ½ hours prior to an international flight.

"While there will be far fewer spring break travelers this year than there were pre-pandemic, the airport will be busy, particularly at peak hours in the early and mid-morning and mid-afternoon," said Brian Ryks, CEO of the Metropolitan Airports Commission, which operates MSP. "We've invested heavily in making the air travel journey safer for those who need or choose to travel. We strongly encourage travelers to support our health safety efforts by wearing their required face coverings, washing their hands regularly, using hand sanitizer, and abiding by social distancing recommendations, especially in check-in and security lines."

In February, the Aviation Public Health Initiative at [the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health released a report](#) that showed airports implemented significant precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, made timely science-based decisions to manage the threat and adopted a layered approach to mitigation. The same report also found that passengers can help manage their exposure to risk by keeping as distant as possible from others. In an earlier study, Harvard researchers [found low risk of infection in flying](#) because of plane air-filtering systems and other measures.

Queueing areas that promote better social distancing and seat blocking signs have been incorporated across the airport as part of the multi-layered [Travel Confidently MSP program](#), which launched last summer. A robust airport cleaning program, the deployment of hundreds of hand sanitizing stations across terminals, and the installation of protective barriers at customer contact points are additional health safety measures.

Travelers who plan ahead can take some extra precautions. MSP offers [prebooked parking](#) that not only guarantees a spot for customers, but also gives them a touchless experience by using a QR code from the online parking confirmation to enter and exit the ramp. A spring break promotion will offer a daily discount to parkers in Terminal 1 for extended stays between March 5–26.

At the airport, passengers can opt for more touchless transactions by ordering their meals inside Terminal 1 through the MSP ASAP portal. This contactless online order portal uses a single site, [asap.mspairport.com](#), where passengers can order food for pickup or delivery from multiple MSP venues. Many MSP restaurants have also employed QR codes for their menus,

along with many concession venues accepting more app pay services to promote additional contactless transactions.

In anticipation of more passengers in March, Delta Air Lines will increase its check-in capacity in Terminal 1. Delta will open its east curb check-in counters beginning March 10. Those ticket counters will operate daily between 6 a.m. and 12 noon. Delta's Tram Level ticket counters will also be open at various times to offer another alternative to its main ticketing lobby counters.

For the latest TSA security and travel guidance, visit <https://www.tsa.gov/travel>.

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) owns and operates one of the nation's largest airport systems, including Minneapolis-St Paul International (MSP) and six general aviation airports. The MAC's airports connect the region to the world and showcase Minnesota's extraordinary culture to millions of passengers from around the globe who arrive or depart through MAC airports each year. Though a public corporation of the state of Minnesota, the organization is not funded by income or property taxes. Instead, the MAC's operations are funded by rents and fees generated by users of its airports. For more information, visit www.metroairports.org.