

Airlines fine passengers who purchased duty free

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In recent years the trend of charging extra for checked baggage by airlines has resulted in a surge in the number of passengers who do not check their bags. While airlines have always had guidelines for carry-on baggage, most of them were not especially strict in controlling them. Recently, this has begun to change. Many airlines around the world have begun weighing and measuring carry-on baggage to ensure it fits within their set guidelines. If not, then passengers are forced to check this baggage.

Until now this weighing and measuring has normally taken place before the passenger has had a chance to shop in the duty free stores. Recent happenings in India, however, should make duty free operators sit up and pay attention. *Muscat Daily* reports that a number of passengers were recently refused passage on an Air India Express flight because the weight of their carry-on exceeded limits after they made duty free purchases. Travelers were not pleased to discover that the already-low weight restriction for carry-on luggage included purchases made at the airport after check-in. These unsuspecting duty free shoppers were surprised to find when boarding that they had to either pay a fine or miss their flight.

Airline officials confirm passengers are often unaware that duty free goods are included in the weight

restriction, and that this lack of information can cause problems at boarding. According to the report, Air India Express is not the only airline with this rule; others have similar restrictions. This is not good news for airport duty free operators. If this practice were to catch on, it could have massive ramifications.

José Luis Donagary, Secretary General of ASUTIL, comments: "While I cannot comment on this specific case as I do not know the details, severe restrictions on duty free purchases in airports will only serve to reduce the non-aeronautical proportion of airports' earnings. This will inevitably result in higher fees for airlines."