



Partnering for Compliance, Airport Worker Screening

by Jason Ieracitano



For over a decade, I've had the privilege of working to secure the airways for the traveling public. From Rochester, NY, to Kansas City, my career has evolved with security screening technologies and regulations. In a few short months, TSA's [National Amendment TSA-NA-23-02 mandates](#) will require operators of some of the largest airports in the United States to begin screening aviation workers and to purchase and use explosives-detection systems for worker screening by 2026. It's a pivotal shift in airport security operations, one that many believe is necessary to mitigate insider threats and strengthen the aviation ecosystem's overall security.

RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGE

TSA-NA-23-02 will present a real challenge for many of this country's 440+ airports. Transportation Security Officers screen more than 2 million passengers per day. To accommodate airport worker screening, additional staff will be necessary. From the boots-on-the-ground perspective, it's a big ask; the mandate is unfunded, and airports must comply within 6 months. Yes, that means April 2026. This creates a difficult conundrum. Airports are being asked to meet higher security standards without the benefit of designated federal funding and also hire and train new staff to meet those standards.

Complicating the matter even further is the recent ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. The court issued its [opinion](#) in the [City of Billings, et. al. v. Transportation Security Administration \(City of Billings\)](#). It's a bit complicated, but when implementing the new policy, TSA should have adhered to the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) notice-and-comment procedures when disseminating the [National Amendment](#). The Court directed TSA to either adopt a procedurally sound rule to implement the requirements or decide that it is no longer necessary to promulgate a rule.

Now here is the tricky part. The Court cited security concerns and the rule's long-standing status since September 2023, so the current requirements under the National Amendment will remain in place until TSA issues a final rule on airport worker screening or determines it's unnecessary.

Mitigating insider threats is critical. In 2019, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) estimated that more than [1.8 million aviation workers](#) had unescorted access to security-restricted areas of the nation's airports. There are many workers who will be impacted by this mandate, and many threats that will be mitigated. To explain further, let's take a look at the limited case study of Seattle Tacoma International Airport (SEA). At the American Association of Airport Executives Annual Meeting in 2023, the Airport shared its success during an Insider Threat Session. SEA reported that screening ~98% of airport workers resulted in the [detection of 5 firearms](#) at the employee screening checkpoint over a one-year period.

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SECURE RESULTS. *DELIVERED.*

Airport worker screening safeguards airports and travelers. It is tough to deny such successful results when safety is a concern. Currently, TSA uses the Advanced Threat Location Allocation Strategy (ATLAS), which requires random worker checks; however, there is a wide range of interpretations and implementations of the policy.

Still, the urgency of the threat environment and the direction of TSA mandate are clear. Proactively addressing insider risk through aviation worker screening is no longer optional; it is the new baseline for secure airport operations. Forward-thinking airports have an opportunity to get ahead of the curve, demonstrate leadership, and shape implementation models that could guide future policy and potential funding decisions.

HOW VMD CAN HELP IMPLEMENT A ROBUST, COMPLIANT AWS PROGRAM

As an experienced partner in the TSA Screening Partnership Program (SPP), VMD, an Xcelerate Company, stands ready to help airports meet and exceed the requirements of this mandate; efficiently, effectively, and with minimal operational disruption.

SPP-PROVEN PERFORMANCE

Decades of experience delivering compliant, high-quality screening services under TSA oversight. We're not learning on your time in fact we've already delivered years of compliant, high-quality screening under TSA oversight at airports across the country. That means we know exactly how to minimize disruption during transition while maintaining security continuity.

INNOVATION-DRIVEN APPROACH

TSA standards are evolving, and threats are changing. VMD invests in technology, training, and process innovation so you don't just meet today's requirements; we have prepared for what's next.

PARTNERSHIP-FOCUSED

We work hand-in-hand with airport leadership and TSA to ensure proactive, ongoing compliance—and we advocate for practical, cost-conscious solutions. We see ourselves as an extension of your airport team. That means constant communication, early problem-solving, and transparent reporting so there are no surprises.

NAVIGATING AN UNFUNDED MANDATE, TOGETHER

VMD, an Xcelerate Company, understands the financial and operational pressures airports face. Every airport is different in size, layout, and throughput. We don't force a cookie-cutter approach; we customize staffing, processes, and technology to match your unique environment. We design and scale screening operations tailored to each airport's size, layout, and throughput needs. Our approach is to work with you and TSA to identify phased, risk-based, and cost-efficient solutions. It may even mean exploring grant opportunities, so that compliance doesn't come at the expense of your bottom line. We approach implementation as a true partner, helping identify scalable, cost-efficient solutions that balance security needs with budget realities. We can assist airports:

- ❖ Assess current vulnerabilities and readiness
- ❖ Develop phased, risk-based implementation plans
- ❖ Explore opportunities for grants or alternative funding
- ❖ Coordinate directly with TSA on compliance strategy

SECURE RESULTS. **DELIVERED.**

A STRATEGIC PARTNER FOR A NEW SECURITY ERA

As the TSA elevates its standards, airports need a partner who not only understands the “what” but also excels at the “how.” VMD combines federal security expertise with private-sector agility to deliver high-performance solutions that fulfill the mission and prepare for what’s next.

AWS WRAP UP

Airports need a partner that understands both TSA requirements and airport realities. VMD brings decades of proven SPP performance, technical expertise in integrating screening technology, and the ability to customize security operations to your airport’s needs. We know this EDSE mandate is unfunded, and that’s why we approach implementation as a partner, we will work with you to develop phased, scalable solutions, explore funding opportunities, and keep costs predictable. Most importantly, we ensure a seamless transition by retaining qualified staff, coordinating directly with TSA, and delivering quick, measurable improvements. With VMD, you don’t just check the box, you get a partner who protects your mission today and prepares you for tomorrow.

Let’s talk about how to navigate this transition and build a stronger security posture together.

About the Author

Jason brings 20 years of management experience to VMD, an Xcelerate Company, including over a decade in airport security. He has improved U.S. aviation safety and efficiency. Rising from Transportation Security Officer to Business Development Manager for Homeland Defense at VMD, where he is a top aviation security expert. He oversees screening, access control, exit lane monitoring, and compliance at major SPP airports such as Kansas City (MCI), Rochester (ROC), Atlantic City (ACY), Orlando Sanford (SFB), and Montana airports. His leadership includes managing over 320 TSA-certified officers at MCI, handling airport transitions, and building partnerships with federal, airport, and industry stakeholders. He is a PMP, Airport Security Coordinator, and Airport Certified Employee. Jason is dedicated to improving homeland defense and mentoring future aviation security professionals.



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