



AIR TRANSPORT INDUSTRY IMPROVES BAGGAGE HANDLING DESPITE SURGE IN PASSENGER TRAFFIC - SITA

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SITA announced an improvement in air transport industry's rate of mishandled baggage. Newly launched SITA Baggage IT Insights 2024 reports the number of bags mishandled by the industry falling from 7.6 to 6.9 per 1,000 passengers in 2023. This is despite passenger numbers rising above 2019 levels for the first time in five years, growing to 5.2 billion. The long-term trend underlines the positive impact of technology investments. A steep 63% drop in the mishandling rate from 2007 to 2023 happened as passenger traffic rose by 111%. But the industry still faces challenges, particularly managing surges in baggage volumes. Pushing ahead with the industry's digitalization agenda is vital, argues the survey, focusing on AI for data analysis and computer vision tech in automated baggage handling.

That push must include full automation, good communication, and full visibility of each bag's journey. Other SITA research* reveals passenger anxiety about delays and cancellations (32% in 2023). It shows that two-thirds of airlines now offer unassisted bag drop, and 85% of airports offer

self-service bag drop. This reflects industry demand for self-service tech for better passenger flows. At the same time, passengers want to use their mobile phones as they travel, including at bag collection. Today, 32% of passengers rely on bag collection information sent straight to their mobile. Better communication and visibility for passengers will encourage more use of digital self-service and give passengers control over their journey.

Collaboration is critical. While airlines and airports share baggage data, there's still room for improvement. At baggage collection only 58% of airlines share data. At the same time, 66% of airports share baggage delivery data with airlines. SITA's Baggage IT Insights survey cites IATA's call for full baggage tracking and real-time status data as part of its Resolution 753 initiative, with data sharing across the bag journey. The survey also points to Airports Council International's call for self-service, real-time communication, and visibility for passengers to reduce stress and anxiety.

David Lavorel, SITA CEO, commented: "The improved mishandled baggage rate in 2023 is great news for passengers and for aviation. It's especially impressive as global passenger traffic grew strongly in 2023 and is set to double by 2040. We clearly see from the SITA Baggage IT Insights results that baggage automation is the way forward, with more collaboration, more communication with passengers, and investments in new technologies such as AI and computer vision to make the journey smoother. From my own travel experiences, I can say this will be really welcome. Technologies like these are essential because they help us gather, integrate, and share data effectively. This means we can uncover important insights that make decision-making easier and more automated."

Looking at North America, the SITA Baggage IT Insights report shows a modest long-term drop in the baggage mishandling rate from 7.1 per 1,000 bags in 2007 to 5.8 in 2023. U.S.-only figures highlight a strong improvement in 2023 (North America: DOT Air Travel Consumer Report). U.S. airlines reduced mishandled baggage by 9% year-on-year, thanks to more frontline workers and investments in baggage equipment and information technology.

Looking at Europe, the SITA Baggage IT Insights report shows that the region experienced the biggest long-term drop globally in the baggage mishandling rate from 16.6 per 1,000 bags in 2007 to 10.6 in 2023.

Looking at Asia Pacific, the SITA Baggage IT Insights report shows a steady long term baggage mishandling rate at 3.1 per 1,000 bags in 2007 and 3.0 in 2023. However, this still reflects the best rate globally in terms of mishandled baggage. The report comments on the commendable and consistent levels in the region despite the challenges of recovery. It highlights the success of investments in digitalizing the baggage handling process.

13 JUNE 2024

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