



**CISA**  
CYBER+INFRASTRUCTURE



# Public Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide

Commercial Facilities Sector

June 2019



## Letter from the Assistant Director

Across the United States, people should expect that they will be safe and secure as they cheer on a favorite team at a sporting event, go shopping, attend a house of worship, study in school, dine out with family and friends, or any of a myriad of activities that bring them to public places.

The Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) works closely with public and private sector partners to mitigate risk to protect our infrastructure. This mission includes working to secure public venues in partnership with the private sector owners and operators of these facilities, which are represented by the Commercial Facilities Sector Coordinating Council.



The Public Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide you are about read is the result of a joint effort to update public-private sector security recommendations to meet ever-evolving threats. This document updates and expands upon the Sports Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide published in 2012. The intent of this product is to incorporate changes in bag search measures applicable to the Commercial Facilities Sector. Addressing the sector's diversity in developing the guide, the Public Venues Working Group was formed with Government Coordinating Council and Sector Coordinating Council members to include representatives from the Sports Leagues, Public Assembly, and Outdoors Events Subsectors who provided expert input based on industry priorities, concerns, and best practices.

The procedures described in this guide are presented as options for consideration; they are not definitive, applicable in all circumstances, or required by any regulation or legislation. A facility's owner, operations manager, or security director may at their discretion implement any or all of these options as deemed applicable.

This guide represents a clear example of the value of public and private collaboration efforts towards enhancing the security and resilience of our nation's critical infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Harrell".

Brian Harrell  
Assistant Director for Infrastructure Security

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# 1 Introduction & Purpose

This guide provides suggestions for developing and implementing bag search procedures at public assembly venues hosting a variety of events, which may include sporting events, concerts, family festivals, or other public gatherings. Venue owners, operators, and event organizers may also choose to use additional resources (e.g., consult law enforcement) to supplement the procedures outlined in this guide.

Bag search procedures are meant to control items that are hand-carried into a venue and may be a part of a venue's overall security plan. This document provides guidance on how to:

- Prepare and plan for bag search procedures in advance of an event;
- Deter individuals from bringing illegal, prohibited, or unusual items into the venue;
- Interact with individuals who are having their bag(s) searched;
- Conduct a bag search and identify items of interest (i.e., illegal, prohibited, or unusual); and
- Respond when items of interest are discovered during a bag search.

**The bag search procedures outlined in this document are for guidance purposes only;** they are not required under any regulation or legislation. In addition, due to the wide variation in the types, sizes, and locations of public assembly venues and the types of events held in these venues, not all suggested procedures will be relevant or applicable.

# 2 Training

All venue personnel should be made aware of bag search procedures and available training, regardless of position or job title. Individuals whose duty it is to conduct the bag searches should be trained in the actual bag search procedures, the equipment needed, item identification, and the appropriate response when discovering items that fall into the three categories—illegal, prohibited, or unusual—described in further detail in [Section 4.2: Item Descriptions](#).

Public venue management should consider providing venue employees, contractors, and event staff with training in general bag search procedures, items not allowed in the venue, and how the bag searches fit into layers of security at the venue.

The training provided may cover topics such as how to:

- ✓ Identify suspicious behavior, including potential coordinated attempts by ticket holders to get around security
- ✓ Coordinate unusual item identification among bag search stations, bag search supervisors, the venue's command post, or law enforcement
- ✓ Identify harmful substances (e.g., explosives are especially important with respect to bomb-making materials) and other substances/items that pose a threat to staff and other ticket holders
  - Examples of harmful items may be outlined in the venue's security plan.
  - Guidelines for identification, retention, transfer of ownership, and disposal should be provided if applicable.
- ✓ Respond appropriately and in compliance with law enforcement protocols in the event of adverse reactions from a bag owner
- ✓ Answer common questions and concerns about the venue's bag search procedures
- ✓ Interact with ticket holders to create a positive "wait" experience by engaging in upbeat conversations with ticket holders and indirectly questioning people who may appear or act suspiciously
- ✓ Coordinate with bag search supervisors or others monitoring the length of the bag search lines to respond to a large number of ticket holders or encourage ticket holders to spread out between lines or use other entrances to the venue
- ✓ Respond safely and quickly to an active assailant

Bag search procedure training should be conducted prior to every event, particularly for individuals who will be conducting the searches. Bag search procedures may change from event to event at the same venue, underscoring how important it is to discuss and practice the appropriate bag search procedures prior to each event.

Training should include venue staff, with supplemental support from law enforcement or others, and observation by supervisory staff.

As part of a training exercise, restricted items may be intentionally placed in bags to assess bag searchers' effectiveness in consistently conducting the bag search regardless of the type of event, items encountered, or the number of ticket holders entering the venue. Any deficiencies in the bag search procedures can then be corrected prior to the event itself.

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

Additional training on protective measures awareness and bombing prevention are available through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at <http://www.dhs.gov/bombing-prevention-training-courses>. The following courses are suggested for physical security officers, supervisors, security personnel, and bag searchers at public events.

**Figure 1. Suggested Trainings**

Title/ Position	<b>WBT AWR-341</b> IED Awareness and Safety Procedures	<b>VILT AWR-335</b> Response to Suspicious Behaviors and items for Bombing Prevention	<b>VILT AWR-348</b> IED Explosive Effects Mitigation	<b>Res-Non-Res MGT- 451</b> Bomb Threat Management Planning Course (BTM)	<b>Res/Non-Res PER-339</b> IED Search Procedures Course
Facility (Physical Security) Officers	●			●	●
Supervisors	●			●	●
Security Personnel	●	●	●		
Bag Searchers	●	●	●		

# 3 Pre-Event Communication and Secondary Perimeters

A public awareness program prior to an event can help familiarize ticket holders with the venue's bag limitations and search procedures before they arrive.

The following key information should be communicated directly to ticket holders, mass transit system operators, and parking lot operators:

- ✓ Bag search procedures, including items not permitted (i.e., illegal or prohibited) in the venue
- ✓ Any limitations or criteria that ticket holders may need to consider (e.g., limit of one bag per ticket holder, size limitations for bags, requirement that bags contain only one compartment)
- ✓ Other advice about timing (e.g., arriving earlier than planned to allow time for the bag search or wait time if there are lines)



Figure 2. Prohibited items (Cleveland Browns)

A variety of methods can be used to share this information and increase public awareness, including:

- ✓ Mailings (both electronic and traditional) to ticket holders
- ✓ Team and/or venue websites
- ✓ Policies printed on the reverse side of tickets
- ✓ Social media and/or mobile apps
- ✓ Radio and television

Bag search information communicated prior to the event or on the day of the event should be provided in the predominant languages of expected ticket holders.

At the venue, if space permits, organizers should establish secondary perimeters—designated areas surrounding the venue through which ticket holders must pass before they reach the screening area—

that allow observation, additional screening (as identified in the venue security procedures), and an extended security perimeter. There are several ways to communicate bag criteria and search procedures at secondary perimeters, including:

- ✓ Posting signs and distributing leaflets at mass transit pick-up points, parking lots, and highly traveled areas approaching the venue and close to bag search areas. This may include:
  - Park-and-ride locations
  - Shuttle pick-up points
  - Parking lots
  - Other mass transportation locations
- ✓ Using visuals to complement written guidance.
- ✓ Visuals could include pictures of permitted and prohibited items.
  - Such visuals can make it easier for bag search procedures to be understood by all attendees, including those whose language is not included in the written instructions.

Venues may also consider looping announcements over a public address system, if available, and posting multilingual employees at key locations to provide information concerning bag search locations and items not permitted in the venue.



Figure 3. Perimeter signage (U.S. Tennis Assn.)



Figure 4. Lines prior to security gate (MetLife Stadium)

# 4 Bag Searches

Bag searches (and possible magnetometer screening where appropriate) are recommended for everyone entering the venue, regardless of whether it is an event or non-event day. This includes employees, contractors, team players and staff, performers, media and official guests, and ticket holders.

Venue bag search policies should be enforced throughout the entire event, from gate opening to gate closing after the event. Any influx of guests should not cause deviations in standard bag search procedures, and it is strongly recommended that bag searches be conducted regardless of wait time.

The potential threat to the venue should determine the setup of bag search locations and lines for bag searches, the bag search procedures, and the level of search detail—from a simple glance into the bag to emptying the contents of the bag. Options for finding or removing items should be based on what is appropriate for the threat to the venue, the type of event, venue, any existing venue pre-event evaluation procedures, expected attendance, and number of individuals supporting the bag searches.

Trained bag search staff and bag search supervisors should perform the bag searches in the safest manner possible so that they identify and respond appropriately to items not permitted in the venue.

## 4.1 Bag Search Locations

Bag search locations are recommended at all open venue entrances. Venue management may also choose to conduct bag searches on personnel as they exit the venue to prevent theft.

The venue should allow sufficient room for crowd movement, providing an appropriate number of bag search lines, tables, and bag search staff at each of the venue entrances that is commensurate with the anticipated flow of attendees, possibly predicted through ticket sales.



Figure 5. Event Searches (Major League Baseball)



Figure 6. Bag search location (MetLife Stadium)

# Bag Searches

The venue should consider the following when setting up bag search locations:

- ✓ Where will bag search lines or crowds not impede foot traffic around the entrances?
- ✓ Where will tickets be checked or scanned, and where will credentialing for venue personnel or event staff (e.g., media, players or performers) be conducted? Is there room near these locations?
- ✓ Where are other security activities (e.g., personal searches) taking place? Can the bag search location be set up separate and prior to these efforts?

The following materials or supplies are recommended for each location where bag searches will be conducted:

- ✓ Signage identifying prohibited and permissible items may be posted at each bag search location.
- ✓ Templates that show the permissible bag size or allow ticket holders to check the size of their bags should be at the beginning of the bag search lines so that ticket holders can quickly determine whether their bags are permissible or not.
- ✓ Bicycle rack-type barriers or portable fencing may be used to separate individual bag search areas and direct lines. This can help guide individuals and groups into manageable lines and prevent individuals from moving from one area to another in an effort to avoid the bag search process.
- ✓ Lighting may be used in the bag search locations; this is particularly important for evening events.
- ✓ The bag search locations may be covered to guard against inclement weather.
- ✓ Trash cans or amnesty boxes may be setup (see [Section 4.5.4: Amnesty Boxes](#)) for individuals to remove or dispose of items prior to lining up or while in line, as appropriate.

If a specific entrance is provided for individuals with special needs, ensure that the location is accessible to those with access and functional needs (e.g., using crutches or other means of assistance, including a wheelchair or walker).



Figure 7. Entrance to bag searches (U.S. Tennis Assn.)

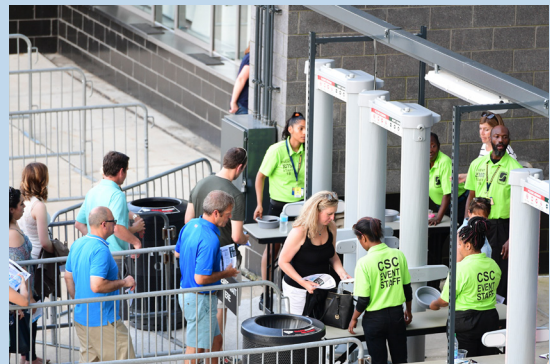


Figure 8. Bag search lines with barriers (Contemporary Services Corporation)


To expedite processing and avoid backups at an entrance prior to credentialing or ticket scanning, venues may consider a separate line without bag searches for any individuals not carrying bags. These individuals should be directed through security and to the ticket scanning or credentialing area. This arrangement may streamline the inspection process and improve the processing times. Before employing a separate line for people without bags, there are a few factors to consider:

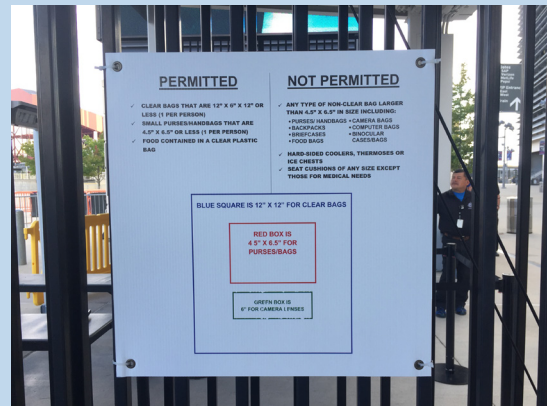
- ✓ In general, a bag search line is always recommended for all individuals entering the venue. Venues may defer to the pre-event evaluation threat assessment to determine whether non-bag search lines are appropriate.
- ✓ If non-bag search lines are used, bag search staff and security personnel should be aware and alert for “pocket stuffing,” or ticket holders attempting to avoid bag search lines by placing bags or items in their pockets. Staff should also be alert for people potentially concealing prohibited items through “pocket stuffing.”

If bag search lines prevent an easy exit, a separate exit line may be appropriate for ticket holders who wish to leave the venue or remove themselves from the bag search process.

## 4.2 Item Descriptions

Items that are not permitted in the venue can be classified two ways: illegal or prohibited. Other items may be considered unusual but may still be permitted in the venue.

- ✓ Illegal items** are any items that are illegal at the city, county, state, or federal level (e.g., explosives, narcotics, or drug paraphernalia). A government entity usually specifies illegal items.
- ✓ 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, razor blades, glass bottles, alcohol, hard coolers, umbrellas, backpacks and multi-pocketed bags over a specified size, pepper spray containers, or air horns).
- Venue management may also identify prohibited items based on safety or their experience with different types of events.
- 
- Figure 10. Unusual Items (DHS)**



**Figure 9. Permitted and not permitted item signage (MetLife Stadium)**



### Figure 10. Unusual Items (DHS)

- Venue management may also consider when exceptions to the prohibited items list may be made (e.g., allowing syringes, inhalers, or certain types of coolers for medical reasons, or diaper bags or other supplies for babies).
- ☑ Unusual items are items that are generally permitted or legal within the venue but may be considered unusual 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, etc.). In general, these items usually have no legitimate use by a ticket holder entering the venue.
- Additional factors to consider include the weight of the item or any unusual alteration of the item.
- Personnel should be alert to unusual items that may not seem harmful at first glance, but when combined with other items could produce an illegal item (e.g., disassembled gun parts, or electrical tape, crimpers, or wire cutters that could be used with other components for assembling an improvised explosive device).
- Venue management may determine that items classified as prohibited or unusual during an event may be allowed during non-event days (e.g., multi-pocket bags, small coolers, computers, or food). A posting with a list of items that are not permitted during non-event days is recommended at personnel entrances.

**It is recommended that bag searchers or other event staff remain alert of suspicious activities by ticket holders (e.g., not making eye contact when spoken to by bag searcher(s), acting extremely nervous, or making attempts to avoid security), along with concealing items underneath their clothing. These behaviors may warrant a one-on-one discussion with that individual and event security staff or law enforcement.**



**Figure 11. Law enforcement placement in front of ticket collection (DHS)**

Recommended procedures for what to do if any of these types of items are found during a bag search are outlined in [Section 4.5: Bag Search Findings](#). In addition, the list of these items as well as example items should be considered for incorporation into pre-event training and bag search procedures. It is recommended that venue management prepare a list of illegal and prohibited items for distribution (via leaflet or email) to employees, contractors, event staff, and ticket holders before the event. The list should also be posted on signs to ensure everyone is aware of items not permitted in the venue.

### 4.3 Bag Search Lines and Staffing

Proper staffing for bag search lines is of critical importance. When determining which staff to have on hand, venue management may consider a mix of supervisors, bag search staff, law enforcement personnel, and staff who direct and answer questions from ticket holders. These staffing decisions can be based on the pre-event evaluation of the threat, the anticipated number and flow of attendees, venue-specific security procedures, and the resources available for event security. To ensure effective staffing, venue management may also consider:

- ✓ **Rotating bag search staff** to different lines or roles to avoid complacency in bag searches.
- ✓ **Staffing** to help direct ticket holders to less crowded lines or entrances, troubleshoot any issues, and fill in if needed to keep congested lines moving.
- ✓ **Locating uniformed law enforcement** between the bag search locations and the ticket scanning areas, if law enforcement is onsite.
  - This positioning may allow the uniformed officer(s) to observe the bag search procedures and the in-processing of the ticket holders while still maintaining an effective presence.

As mentioned in [Section 4.1: Bag Search Locations](#), where a bag search is done is important to ensuring efficiency and flow. Along the same lines, the number, location, and purpose of bag search lines can also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of bag searches.

#### 4.3.1 Consent and Right to Refuse

Bag searches of ticket holders are voluntary. However, venue management may consider including explicit language in any communication so that individuals are made aware before purchasing tickets or arriving at the venue that a) their bags will be searched at the venue prior to entry, and b) failure to allow a bag search will result in denial of entry.

As discussed in [Section 3: Pre-Event Communication and Secondary Perimeters](#), this information should be broadly distributed by the venue ahead of an event and posted the day of the event.

Ticket holders who refuse a bag search may have the option, if appropriate and available, to take unauthorized bags or prohibited items back to their vehicle, check the item(s) at a temporary storage facility, or dispose of the item(s). (See [Section 4.5.3: Temporary Storage Area](#) or [4.5.4: Amnesty Boxes](#) for further information about temporary storage or disposal of items.)

Prospective employees and contractors should be made aware that bag searches are mandatory and may be conducted when entering or exiting the venue.

#### 4.3.2 Addressing Adverse Mindset and Threatening Statements

There is often a degree of impatience among ticket holders as they enter an event. Bag search personnel must maintain control at bag search locations and effectively manage the queue lines without feeling pressured to rush through their bag search responsibilities.

As mentioned in prior sections, communicating information about bag search procedures, prohibited items, and expected wait times can help ticket holders prepare for bag search lines. Developing a list of frequently asked questions and appropriate answers can inform ticket holders ahead of an event and equip bag search personnel

and supervisors to address ticket holder concerns, justify the venue's bag search procedures with a consistent message, and potentially diffuse any animosity.

**If a ticket holder makes threatening statements (e.g., “I have a bomb”), they should be taken seriously.** Bag search personnel should be certain of what the ticket holder said by asking the ticket holder to repeat the statements. The ticket holder should be informed that the statements are taken seriously. The bag searcher should immediately notify event security, supervisors, and law enforcement of such statements.

### 4.3.3 Refusal of Bag Search

If a ticket holder refuses to comply with the bag search, bag search personnel should contact the bag search supervisor to reinforce that the bag search procedure is a requirement for entry into the venue. This process should be conducted in a non-combative manner by asking the ticket holder to stand aside from the bag search line to allow others to pass through while waiting for the supervisor to arrive.

An exit lane should be available to allow ticket holders who do not wish to have their bags searched to leave the venue.

## 4.4 Conducting a Bag Search

Bag searches should be performed only on bags that meet the size and construction criteria. Ticket holders with oversized bags or bags that do not meet construction criteria (e.g., the venue only allows plastic bags or single-compartment bags) should be asked to return their bag to their vehicle or check the bag at the temporary storage area, if available (see [Section 4.5.3: Temporary Storage Area](#)). The following steps should be employed by bag search personnel when they conduct a bag search:

- ✓ Greet the ticket holder and make eye contact; remain courteous to the ticket holder at all times.
- ✓ Ask the bag owner whether it is okay for their bag to be searched.
  - If they refuse, inform them of the venue's bag search policy.
  - If they still refuse, they should be directed away from the venue through a separate exit line.
  - It is recommended that a supervisor be notified if a bag holder is directed to exit the facility.
- ✓ Have the ticket holder place the bag on the inspection table.
- ✓ Conduct an inspection of the outside of the bag:
  - Pick up the bag. Notice whether the weight of the bag is consistent with the size and contents of the bag.
  - Hold the bottom of the bag to help determine whether heavy or cylindrical items are present inside the bag.



Figure 12. Bag search in process (MetLife Stadium)

- Feel the top, sides, and bottom of the outside of the bag for any signs that the exterior of the bag has been altered to create a hidden compartment.
  - Does the bag have a false bottom?
  - Does the bag have rigid sides when they should be flexible?
  - If it is a “soft” bag, feel the outside.
  - Are there any out-of-the-ordinary bulges or bumps?
- Notice whether the construction of the bag has been altered.
- Look for any signs that could indicate the bag has been tampered with (e.g., mismatched hardware, resewn or glued seams).
- ☑ Check inside the bag:
  - Ask the ticket holder to please open the bag and any compartments so the inside can be inspected.
    - Ticket holders must hold their bag open and keep it open for visual inspection.
    - Avoid handling items directly unless the items are unique or of questionable purpose.
  - Ask the ticket holder to unwrap any wrapped items for inspection.
  - Use a non-metallic/non-magnetic stick or tool to move items around the inside of the bag for a clearer view.
    - Refrain from putting your hands in a ticket holder's bag.
    - There may be potentially harmful items in the bag and the searcher should avoid being accused of theft.
  - Examine the interior and contents of the bag from top to bottom, layer-by-layer, clearing each area before continuing, in a systematic manner that ensures a complete search.
- Systematic search patterns reduce the risk of missing critical observations about the bag and its contents.
  - Create a search method (e.g., going clockwise or counterclockwise throughout the bag), beginning with the pockets on the outside, then the pockets on the inside, then the space(s) in the middle of the bag.
  - Check the side, top, and bottom walls and seams of the bag to ensure that item(s) are not concealed.
  - Heavy items tend to be in the lowest portion of the bag. Items may be concealed in places such as within rolled clothing (e.g., sweatshirts or ponchos) or cases designed for other items (e.g., cameras or eyeglasses). Stuffed or padded items could prevent a bag searcher from detecting a concealed item. Bag searchers must also rely on the weight of an object to determine whether any prohibited item(s) is concealed.
- Ask the ticket holder to remove large items:
  - Ask the ticket holder to unfold and shake out any blankets, towels, and hand-carried clothing (e.g., jackets) in plain sight.
  - Bag search staff should pat down the clothing pockets of carried clothing.
- Do not make comments regarding the ticket holder's property or bag contents.
- Pay attention to odd odors that may bring attention to a particular bag.
  - Odd odors may imply potential hazards, so care should be taken when conducting a thorough search of that bag.
  - Bag handlers should not sniff bag contents or open containers to directly inhale the content.

Additional guidelines and special circumstances:

- ✓ Provide accommodations for ticket holders who have special needs, including:
  - Inspect bags attached to wheelchairs. If the ticket holder is able to stand, the ticket holder should be asked to stand so that the seat of the wheelchair may be visibly searched.
  - Describe the bag search process as it is occurring to a visually impaired ticket holder.
  - Provide pre-printed cards outlining the bag search procedures to ticket holders who are hearing impaired.
- ✓ Arrange for a multiple bag search process for special events, such as sporting events, that require multiple bags.
  - Arrangements with the team(s) and event organizer should be made ahead of the bags' arrival to ensure that all parties are aware of the process.

## 4.4.1 Bag Search Equipment

There are several pieces of equipment that should be on hand for staff to use to safeguard themselves while conducting an effective bag search. Venue management should consider making the following equipment available to bag search staff at all bag search locations:



**Stick/Rod:** to move items around inside the bag without making physical contact with the items in the bag or to tap the bottom and sides of the bag to help determine whether there is a false bottom or compartment. A ruler, paint stirrer, or other similar item could also be used.



**Flashlight:** to better illuminate the interior of the bag, regardless of the time of day. A longer flashlight may also be used in place of a stick to view inside bag compartments.



**Disposable rubber gloves:** to protect bag search personnel when manipulating items inside of a bag. Consider providing an appropriate range of sizes, as well as types of material that accommodate potential allergies (e.g., non-latex disposable gloves).



**Containers/Bins:** to confine and sort items if items must be removed from a package or bag.



**Template/Bin:** to alert the ticket holder of the permissible size of a bag.



**Communication equipment (e.g., cell phones, radios):** to allow bag search staff and supervisors to communicate. Megaphones may also be useful for supervisory staff to make operational announcements.



**Tables:** to help support bags and provide a surface on which to conduct the search.



**Checklists:** on a clipboard, lanyard, or pocket-sized card provide an easy reference to a description of item types, the steps for bag search procedures, or steps to take for specific bag search findings.

### 4.5 Bag Search Findings

It is recommended that venues establish clear procedures in the event that bag search personnel or event security staff find an illegal, prohibited, or unusual item during a bag search. How the item is disposed of and the level of law enforcement involvement will depend upon the category of the item discovered, the venue's security procedures, and law enforcement's participation in a venue's security.

If an illegal or prohibited item is found:

- ✓ Immediately notify supervisors, security staff, and law enforcement as detailed in the venue's bag search procedures.
- ✓ Do not leave the illegal or prohibited item unattended at the bag search area.
- ✓ Switch out the search staff member that discovered the item with other bag search staff to continue the bag search process for other ticket holders.
- ✓ Have event security relocate the bag owner and the bag searcher to a separate location to further investigate the discovered illegal or prohibited item.
- ✓ Remove unnecessary or high levels of attention toward the suspect bag or item(s).
- ✓ Use a duress word when a suspicious item is found.
- ✓ Monitor the activities of the owner of the item until it can be determined that the item does not pose a threat.
- ✓ If a ticket holder refuses to surrender items, they should be refused entry. If law enforcement are on site, ask them to assist. Law enforcement can also provide additional guidance and information to the ticket holder regarding their property and the bag search procedures.

#### 4.5.1 Item Handling Procedures

It is recommended that the venue's bag search procedures:

- ✓ Clearly identify actions to take if an illegal, prohibited, or unusual item is discovered.
- ✓ Be developed in coordination with law enforcement and incorporate industry best practices.

The procedures may also detail how items should be handled immediately following discovery; communication with supervisors, event security staff, and law enforcement; and whether an item can be temporarily stored or disposed of so that a ticket holder may enter the venue.

The bag search personnel's primary mission is to prevent illegal and prohibited items from entering the venue. Illegal and prohibited items that need to be investigated further should be retained by law enforcement officials for final disposition. Unless there is an unusual circumstance, law enforcement may not normally need to be involved with preventing prohibited items from the facility.

## 4.5.1.1 Illegal Items

It is recommended that the venue's bag search procedures specify that the discovery of illegal items result in immediate notification of supervisors, the security staff responsible for the event, and law enforcement. The specific notification procedure may vary depending on whether law enforcement is or is not present at the venue.

- ✓ **If law enforcement is present at the venue**, they will likely take the lead in determining the proper disposition of the illegal item(s).
- ✓ **If law enforcement is offsite**, venue management should consider how to handle illegal items in accordance with guidance provided by law enforcement officials. This may include having event security staff escort the ticket holder with the illegal item(s) away from the bag search area to a secure location until law enforcement arrives.

## 4.5.1.2 Prohibited Items

Bag search personnel who identify prohibited items may accompany the ticket holder and the item(s) to the bag search supervisor and law enforcement, if appropriate, for disposal or storage of the item(s). Options may include the use of an amnesty box, checking the item(s) into a temporary storage area, or returning the item(s) to the ticket holder's vehicle. (See [Section 4.5.3: Temporary Storage Area](#) or [4.5.4: Amnesty Boxes](#) for further information about temporary storage or disposal of items.)

The venue's security staff should ensure that all prohibited items, if disposed of, are disposed of properly and not left unattended or placed in the trash.

## 4.5.1.3 Unusual Items

The disposal of unusual items will depend on the item(s) discovered. For safety purposes, it is recommended that a supervisor, event security, and law enforcement be contacted when unusual items are discovered. In specific instances, law enforcement may consider confiscating unusual items.

It is recommended that venue management coordinate between different bag search locations to determine whether other unusual items have been identified, which could be combined with other items discovered and used in a harmful way.

If it is determined there is an unusual item present—through observation or some suspicious activity on the part of the ticket holder—that may be used to cause harm at the event, it may be necessary to dispose of the item(s) by using an amnesty box, check the item(s) in a temporary storage facility, or return the item(s) to the ticket holder's vehicle. (See [Section 4.5.3: Temporary Storage Area](#) or [4.5.4: Amnesty Boxes](#) for further information about temporary storage or disposal of items.)

## 4.5.2 Notifying Supervisor/Law Enforcement

If bag searchers discover an illegal, prohibited, or unusual item during the bag search, bag search personnel should take the following steps based on their venue's bag search procedures:

- ✓ Immediate verbal notification to supervisors, event security, and law enforcement.
  - Use caution and know when to use and not use mobile communication devices such as handheld radios or cellular phones to notify supervisors.

- Certain devices (e.g., improvised explosive devices) can be triggered by radio frequencies.
- Maintain a 50-foot standoff distance for radios and cellphones.
- ☑ Coordinate between bag search locations around the venue to determine whether unusual items have been identified that may complement or be used in some harmful way with other items discovered.

### 4.5.2.1 Intervention by Venue Staff

In the event that law enforcement is not available, bag searchers should practice extreme caution when dealing with suspect items. It is recommended that bag search personnel:

- ☑ Remain calm at all times and present a professional demeanor with high regard for guest service.
- ☑ Contact supervisor(s) personnel or the security staff responsible for the event. This should be done in a way that will avoid unnecessary or high levels of attention toward the suspect bag or item(s).

### 4.5.3 Temporary Storage Area

Even with a public awareness program to educate ticket holders about the venue's bag search procedures, prohibited or unusual items may be brought to the bag search location. If appropriate, the venue management may ask that the ticket holder:

- ☑ Return the item(s) or bag to their vehicle, or
- ☑ Store the item(s) or bag in a temporary storage area (either for free or for a fee).



Figure 13. Temporary storage location (U.S. Tennis Assn.)

Based on the potential threats identified during pre-event evaluation, venue management should decide the types of items and bag that are allowed in this temporary storage area. The venue management determines the level of inspection needed on items and bags stored. 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 at least 300 feet away from the event.

### 4.5.4 Amnesty Boxes

Venue management should coordinate with law enforcement on whether the use of an amnesty box is appropriate for the disposal of items voluntarily surrendered by ticket holders. Law enforcement personnel may outline any instructions, including who is responsible for its use and its contents. Information about amnesty boxes should be clearly communicated to ticket holders prior to an event and are included in signs near heavily-traversed areas outlining bag search procedures. If an amnesty box is used, training should include the policies and procedures on how to use it.

# 5 Additional Resources

DHS provides a number of websites, videos, guides, and other resources that may be useful for those developing bag search procedures for public venues.

## DHS Websites

Title	Link
Active Shooter Preparedness Program	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness">https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness</a>
Homeland Security Information Network – Critical Infrastructure (HSIN-CI)	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/hsin-critical-infrastructure">https://www.dhs.gov/hsin-critical-infrastructure</a>
Hometown Security Campaign	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/hometown-security">https://www.dhs.gov/hometown-security</a>
If You See Something, Say Something®	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something">https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something</a>
Suspicious Activity Reporting Tool	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/suspicious-activity-reporting-tool">https://www.dhs.gov/suspicious-activity-reporting-tool</a>

## DHS Videos

Title	Link
Check It! – Bag Check Video	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/video/check-it-bag-check-video">https://www.dhs.gov/video/check-it-bag-check-video</a>
No Reservations: Suspicious Behavior in Hotels	English: <a href="https://www.dhs.gov/video/no-reservations-suspicious-behavior-hotels">https://www.dhs.gov/video/no-reservations-suspicious-behavior-hotels</a> Spanish: <a href="https://www.dhs.gov/video/sin-reservaciones-comportamiento-sospechoso-en-los-hoteles">https://www.dhs.gov/video/sin-reservaciones-comportamiento-sospechoso-en-los-hoteles</a>
What's in Store: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Events	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/video/whats-store-ordinary-people-extraordinary-events">https://www.dhs.gov/video/whats-store-ordinary-people-extraordinary-events</a>

## DHS Guides and Other Publications

Title	Link
<i>Commercial Facilities Sector-Specific Plan, An Annex to the NIPP 2013</i>	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/nipp-ssp-commercial-facilities-2015-508.pdf">https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/nipp-ssp-commercial-facilities-2015-508.pdf</a>
<i>Patron Screening Best Practices Guide</i>	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/patron-screening-guide-03-16-508.pdf">https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/patron-screening-guide-03-16-508.pdf</a>
<i>Security of Soft Targets and Crowded Places—Resource Guide</i>	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0424_cisa_soft-targets-and-crowded-places-resource-guide.pdf">https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0424_cisa_soft-targets-and-crowded-places-resource-guide.pdf</a>
<i>Sports Venue Credentialing Guide</i>	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/sports-venue-credentialing-guide-508.pdf">https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/sports-venue-credentialing-guide-508.pdf</a>

## Other Best Practices

Safety and security best practices guides are also available from the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (<https://www.ncs4.com/knowledgeportal/best-practices>).

# 6 Acknowledgements

The guide was developed by the Commercial Facilities Sector Coordinating Council with representation from Public Assembly, Outdoor Events, and Sports Leagues Subsectors.

The Right Stuff Consulting, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Bombing Prevention, and the Transportation Security Administration's Security Procedures Branch also provided input. Photos for this guide were generously provided by the New York Giants, the New York Jets, the Cleveland Browns, Major League Baseball, Contemporary Services Corporation, and the United States Tennis Association.

Please contact [cfsteam@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:cfsteam@hq.dhs.gov) or visit [www.dhs.gov/commercial-facilities-sector](http://www.dhs.gov/commercial-facilities-sector) if you have questions or to find additional resources.