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Passengers hail security here

By ERIC LENKOWITZ

Air travelers who headed to and from "the greatest city in the world" yesterday were somber and subdued — but grateful for heightened security measures at airports.

"This guy was so intent on looking at my bags. He checked every inch," said Sue Ann Zollmar, 53, a travel agent who flew from Denver to La Guardia Airport. "He took the corkscrew. I didn't even think about that. I was more concerned about my nail clippers. They let me keep them."

Her brother-in-law, Dave Jeffrey, welcomed the increased scrutiny.

"I'm glad to see the security measures. We've become so damn lax in this county," said Jeffrey, 63.

His sentiment was echoed by Leo Yoschevich, 62, of Australia, who flew from New Orleans to New York.

"I didn't mind the security. If they said take off your clothes, I wouldn't mind," Yoschevich said.

Already accustomed to answering security-related questions, and walking through metal detectors, travelers are seeing even more precautions after last week's kamikaze terrorist attacks.

New procedures at La Guardia included requiring passengers to show identification both at check-in and the boarding gate — and sometimes at X-ray machines — and barring non-ticket holders from gate areas.

Travelers also are asked at check-in if they are carrying sharp objects. If they are, the objects are checked, and people found with sharp objects at the X-ray machine have them permanently seized.

"We were told that my key-chain knife had to be checked. I asked at check-in, 'Will this get through?' — they said no," said Ray Donley, a Texas artist who flew to New York for a show of his work.

"I did see a heightened presence of security. I would say flying right now, it's safer than ever."

The reasons for these new precautions were omnipresent on the minds of passengers and airline crews alike.

"On board, it was more quiet than usual. We saw the devastation coming in. It grabbed you," said Bob Jeffrey, a contractor from Colorado who arrived with relatives at La Guardia. "Then, with a certain pride and sincerity, they [the captain] said, 'Welcome to New York, the greatest city in the world.'"

Rob Lodsin, 30, a salesman from Denver, said, "I was most scared when I left the ground. It was definitely on my mind. Before we got in the plane, I looked around — checked people out."

"I was kind of scared, especially coming though La Guardia," said a 32-year-old American Airlines flight attendant who worked on a plane from Miami. "It was something to see the smoke and debris from the World Trade Center."

WTC disaster grounds nation's flight schools

By MALCOLM BALFOUR
Post correspondent

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The terrorists who took down the World Trade Center have dealt a crippling blow to flight schools around the country — including the ones that taught them how to fly.

"We're all just hanging out to dry," said flight instructor Ric Hannon at Palm Beach County Airport.

Ever since the terror attacks, the FAA has banned almost all flying under so-called "visual flight rules."

Pilots flying VFR have no obligation to let controllers know they're in the sky — as long as they stay out of restricted airspace.

The unrestricted areas include the airspace over the Hudson River alongside the Trade Center — as long as the plane is below 1,100 feet.

Officials are understandably uncomfortable about not knowing the location of every plane — and are allowing only flights under instrument flight rules. Controllers always know where IFR pilots are.

Dave Allison, who runs the Kemper Aviation School in Lantana, Fla., said, "Somebody's got to do something fast. We're a typical small school. I have 10 instructors working here and there's no flying for any of them. They get paid a minimal subsistence wage and then get paid by the hour for their flying."

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