



TRANSGENDER WOMAN SAYS TSA DETAINED, HUMILIATED HER OVER BODY "ANOMALY"

News / Airlines



A transgender woman said she was detained and harassed at an Orlando, Fla., [airport](#) security checkpoint Monday by Transportation Safety Administration agents after a body scanner detected an "anomaly" on her.

Shadi Petosky, who runs a Los Angeles interactive entertainment studio, said she was trying to fly out of Orlando International Airport but was stopped after entering the scanner.

In her tweets about the situation, Petosky said that TSA agents calibrated the scanner for a woman, and the machine flagged an anomaly - "my penis."

She said she "disclosed [her] reality immediately," but the situation quickly escalated: Over the course of 40 minutes, Petosky said, officials patted her down twice, "fully disassembled" her luggage and put her in an empty room with an officer holding the door.

At one point, she said, an agent told her to "get back in the machine as a man or it was going to be a problem."

The ordeal caused her to miss her flight, she said.

In a statement released early Tuesday morning, the TSA defended its officers' actions. After reviewing security footage, the TSA "determined that the evidence shows our officers followed TSA's strict guidelines."

At least two additional TSA supervisors were called to the scene, the agency said.

Calls to the airport press office were not returned. A spokeswoman for the Orlando Police Department declined to comment.

An American Airlines spokesman told The Times that Petosky would be placed on a new flight free of charge, though Petosky said on Twitter that an airline worker at the airport had charged her card.

According to the TSA website, transgender travelers should "use the name and gender that appears on their government-issued ID when making flight reservations and at the security checkpoint." They can ask for a private screening if they feel uncomfortable going through the process in front of other travelers.

Petosky declined to discuss the matter by phone on Monday, saying she was still struggling to make flight arrangements.

A close friend of hers, Los Angeles resident Jen Richards, said such incidents are not uncommon for transgender people at airports. In fact, Richards said, she's experienced it herself.

The TSA's scanning devices have settings that align with gender norms, Richards said. She said that in 2013, TSA agents in Chicago stopped her because the scanner, which was set for a woman, detected her penis as an anomaly. A similar scenario often unfolds for transgender men who have breasts, Richards said.

Richards said she did not file a complaint against the TSA in 2013 because she simply wanted to forget about the experience.

"I was just kind of humiliated and embarrassed and didn't want to do this any further," Richards said.

Michael Silverman, executive director of the New York-based Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, said his office has received numerous complaints about TSA agents mistreating transgender passengers in recent years, including allegations that the travelers were patted down by agents of the opposite gender.

"For transgender people, flying is fraught with difficulty, often discrimination and very often a lot of fear," he said.

Petosky said on Twitter that she hopes her story is used to change how transgender people are

treated - regardless of their appearance.

For example, she said a TSA officer who helped smooth over the situation "told me I looked like a woman to him. Which I am sure he meant as a compliment, but what if I didn't?"

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