

Government demands to search travelers' devices are on the rise.

Every year, millions of travelers pass through our airports and international borders. The government is increasingly searching the smartphones, laptops, and other electronic devices of travelers passing through these ports.

Has this happened to you?

The ACLU of California wants to hear from you if the government has searched or confiscated your device at any domestic or international airport or international border crossing in California. Contact information appears on the other side of the document.

These searches raise serious constitutional concerns.

Our devices today contain very sensitive information. However, the government takes the misguided position that we forfeit our right to keep our information secure when we travel through borders and airports. We know that Customs and Border Protection routinely searches international travelers' cell phones, laptops, and tablets — often without any suspicion of wrongdoing. We've also heard reports that the Transportation Security Administration is doing the same with domestic passengers.

What can I do when I travel to protect my privacy and information?



- Travel with as few devices as possible, and take with you as little data as possible.
- If you must travel with sensitive data, store it in a secure cloud-based storage account—not on the device itself.
- Password protect your devices with a strong and unique password, and ensure they are encrypted before you travel.
- Do not reveal your device passcode to anyone when you do travel.
- Log off social media accounts on your phone prior to traveling to prevent agents from perusing social media applications.
- Turn on airplane mode for all electronic devices before you cross a border checkpoint.

What can I do if an officer asks or demands to search my device?

- If you're a citizen, you can't be denied entry into the country if you refuse to comply with a request to unlock your device or to provide a password. But you might be detained for longer or have your device seized for weeks or months.
- If you are not a citizen and are concerned about having your devices searched, you should consult with an immigration lawyer about your particular circumstances before traveling.
- Visa holders and tourists from visa waiver countries run the risk of being denied entry if they refuse to provide a password, and they should consider that risk before deciding how to proceed.
- Whether you're a citizen or not, we always recommend that you enter the password yourself rather than divulging it to a government agent. They still might demand that you share it, but it's a precaution worth trying to take.

What if my device is locked and the officer demands my passcode?

Ask why the officer wants to search your device and what she is looking for. Write down the officer's name. You can state that you "Do not consent" to the search, although this likely won't prevent the government from taking your phone. If your device is confiscated, ask for a receipt for your property.

The government has searched or seized my device. What can I do now?

You should **contact the ACLU** if you traveled through any domestic or international airport or international border in California, and any of the following occurred:

- The government searched your smartphone, laptop, tablet, or other electronic device at an airport or at the border.
- Government agents asked you to unlock your phone or computer prior to a search, demanded your passcode, or forced you to provide the passcode under threat of detaining you or your device.
- You have reason to believe the government copied the data on your device while you passed through the airport or border.
- The government seized your electronic device at the airport or the border.

Contact us here:

**For complaints related to any Southern California airport,
please call 213-977-5253 or visit [ACLU of Southern California's website](#).**

LAX Los Angeles International **BUR** Burbank **SNA** John Wayne **LGB** Long Beach

**For complaints related to any Northern California airport,
please call 415-621-2488 or visit [ACLU of Northern California's website](#).**

SFO San Francisco International **OAK** Oakland **SJC** San Jose International
SMF Sacramento International **FAT** Fresno

**For complaints related to any land Port of Entry from
Mexico to California or San Diego International Airport (SAN),
please call 619-232-2121, ext. 67 or visit [ACLU of San Diego's website](#).**