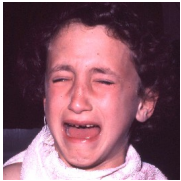


Springtime brings even more of a rush of heavy air travel. With such pressure on airlines to get millions of people to the right destinations, sometimes their baggage flies off in different directions. Statistics today show that one out of every 20 checked bags fails to arrive at the designated airport at the right time. Most are merely misdirected, and eventually get home to their owners. But while they're missing, they cause much distress.



If it happens to you, the scenario is, at the least, upsetting. You wait and wait as the baggage carousel goes slowly 'round and 'round. Then, after everyone else has left, and you've wasted an hour or more of worry, you realize your bags are missing. First, grab an airline employee and make sure your bags may still be nearby, but were mistakenly put on another carousel or are still sitting somewhere in the back areas.

If your bags are still missing after a search, go immediately to the airline office in the terminal and make out a written claim. If you're scheduled to go on a cruise, attend a conference or other occasion where you absolutely need to replace clothing and other items, you must keep receipts of all you had to buy.

If your property doesn't show up within about two weeks, the airline will reimburse you. One way to protect yourself from such frustrating delays is to keep some vital items in a small carry-on bag and check only the big bags. Or, if you can manage to put everything you need for your trip into one wheeled carry-on bag, you can avoid checking altogether.