

*Senior Guest Correspondent PPR, Bend OR:* The most critical moment each traveler must face in airport security is going through the prison-like frisk and search ordeal. It's vitally important that you understand in advance what is expected when in that line, including what you may or may not take on your flight.

The list changes frequently, so it's is your responsibility to keep up on the latest info. On another recent flight, after my wife's carry-on suitcase had gone through the x-ray process, she was pulled aside by two stern-looking guards. They did the electronic stick search of her entire body, and then began working on her opened suitcase. Clothing and other items went flying all around, as they seemed to be looking for something very dangerous. Other guards came over and joined in the clothing-in-the-air toss.

I had visions of visiting my wife in Alcatraz for carrying something evil in her suitcase. One of the guards said mercury, a banned substance, was detected somewhere in her suitcase. Mercury is often used in explosives, hence my wife was a suspect in transporting dangerous materials.

Moments later, another security guy triumphantly held up the offending article ... a medical thermometer with a tiny mercury tube. With nervous laughs all around, and without the thermometer, we were permitted to board our flight.

Whenever you fly today, deal with delays and searches. It's so tight because suicidal religious freaks are holding millions of world travelers hostage with constant threats. Unfortunately, those nutcases believe murdering innocent people is their way to qualify for their 72 virgins in whatever they consider heaven.

Although we often can't help being impatient with airport security frisks and delays, we should be thankful to those guardians who keep our flying safe.