

Major US airlines will ban smart luggage with non-removable batteries starting January 15th

Starting January 15th, a number of major airlines will ban any “smart luggage” that features a non-removable lithium-ion battery. Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, and Alaska Airlines have all released similar guidelines in the last week that will prohibit these bags from being checked or carried onto flights, and others are reportedly considering joining them.

Travelers will still be allowed to check smart luggage with removable batteries, provided they take those batteries with them in the cabin. Luggage with removable batteries will also still be permissible as a carry-on item.

The move to restrict luggage with built-in batteries was spearheaded by American Airlines and the International Air Transport Association in order to decrease the risk of fires caused by lithium-ion batteries. Airlines have previously banned products like hoverboards and the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 over similar concerns.

The new restrictions are “an absolute travesty,” Bluesmart’s CEO says

Tomi Pierucci, the CEO of smart luggage company Bluesmart, says in a statement to *The Verge* that the ban is “an absolute travesty,” and calls it a “huge step back” for travel technology. Bluesmart’s bags (65,000 of which are in use around the world, according to its website) will be particularly affected by the new restrictions because the company does not make the batteries removable.

Other companies that make smart luggage *with* removable batteries, like Away, are taking a softer line in response to the news. "Away's products aren't impacted by the new ban from American Airlines or any of the other airlines. The new policies are banning luggage with non-removable batteries, and since every Away Carry-On has a removable battery, we're not impacted," Away co-founder and CEO Steph Korey says in a statement to *The Verge*. Josh Udashkin, CEO of smart luggage brand Raden, says, "The only issue with some smart luggage brands is that their lithium ion battery is NOT removable. Raden's battery is completely removable."

In a post on Bluesmart's website, the company says it has "organized meetings with the world's leading airlines" in an attempt to create an exemption for its product. "We expect to have developments and positive news about these agreements within the coming weeks and before the various carriers implement these new regulations," the company writes.

Away, however, isn't taking any further action. "We were in touch with American Airlines in advance of the policy announcement, and we're not pushing for exemptions or changes," Korey says.