

Liquid Scanners

Haven Daley:

It's a regular routine for frequent fliers across the country before going through security.

Traveler 1:

I do have to chug my water and remember to get it out of my bags.

Traveler 2:

I forget about it sometimes, and I'll-I'll buy things right before. And, I'm like, I can't. Like, I've thrown out many a bottled water...

Haven Daley:

But someday soon, you may be able to take that full-sized bottle of water right through security thanks to technology originally developed at UC Davis to test whether wine is still good without opening the bottle. The idea came as researchers were wondering if the device could detect the contents of other kinds of containers too.

Matt Augustine:

He said, "Well, I think we should be able to see liquid explosives," and I said, "Well, now that you say it, I-I know that we can see liquid explosives." And so we did some background experiments, and sure enough we could.

Haven Daley:

The Department of Homeland Security is funding the development of the device, which bombards containers with radio waves to identify the chemicals inside.

Joseph Broz:

The promise of a scanner like this would not only enhance security for the traveling public but also increase convenience in security screening.

Haven Daley:

Scientists still need to make the device smaller and quicker. Right now, it takes about five minutes to scan a bottle. For use at busy airports, that needs to come down to five seconds.

Matt Augustine:

Ultimately, it is for safety, right? And protecting people, and ultimately that's our role, right? [It's] to, like, improve our living environment for everyone.

Haven Daley:

If all goes as planned, you could start seeing the new liquid scanners in airports as early as next year, signally an end to that three-ounce bottle rule.

Haven Daley:

Haven Daley, The Associated Press, San Francisco.

© AP Archive. All rights reserved.