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- Photographic film & X-Ray CT scanning - Guidance for users of unprocessed photographic film

The worldwide rollout of X-Ray computerised tomography (CT) scanners throughout airport passenger terminals and courier hubs is accelerating. The placement of these machines is in response to security requirements that can improve safety, speed and efficiency in the travel and transport industries.

Despite concerns raised by film and other photosensitised product manufacturers, the deployment of CT scanners will continue and will now impact those hand-carrying film through airport security as well as those air shipping small (non-palletised) film packages via couriers.

Several photographic companies have carried out independent testing - examining the impact of these scanners across a range of sensitised products. The consensus is that CT Scanners are more impactful when compared to older x-ray screening technology and can result in deterioration in image quality, even for the slowest exposure films.

CT scanners affect unprocessed film, both unexposed and exposed. Processed film is not affected.

Measures taken by the manufacturers of photographic film include:

1. Raising awareness across the entire logistics supply-chain, including distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and laboratories.
2. The implementation of alternative transportation methods such as ground transportation for all non-palletised packages.

These measures will assist in minimising the risk of damage during transportation of film from manufacturer to end-user; however, additional recommendations at the consumer-level are also required, which includes awareness related to:

1. Airport security
2. Shipping by air - risk minimisation

Guidance for users of unprocessed photographic film

1. Airport Security

It is still possible to travel with unprocessed photographic film, however, precautions must be taken to avoid damage from X-Ray CT devices employed by airport security.

- Never pack unprocessed photographic film in baggage that will be checked into the aircraft hold.
- It is advised to carry all photographic film in clear plastic re-sealable bags and to request hand inspection where CT Xray scanners are in use.

- Because hand inspections are not guaranteed at all airports, contacting the airport in advance is strongly advised.
- If hand inspections are not possible and CT scanners are employed, then you may wish to consider alternate arrangements, this may include purchasing and developing the film locally instead.

2. Shipping by air risk minimisation

Most carriers are aware of the sensitive nature of unprocessed photographic film shipments and should be able to advise if they are employing X-Ray CT scanning technology in their distribution network.

Where concerns still exist regarding X-Ray CT scanning, the following mitigation can be considered.

- Contact the sales office of the carrier to discuss your shipping needs including avoidance of X-Ray scanning.
- For high value and critical shipments, the safest method of shipping unprocessed photographic film is via ground shipping.
- Alternatively consider purchasing photographic film locally and, after exposure, processing at a local photographic film laboratory.

For additional or specific information, you are advised to contact your manufacturer of photographic film.

I&P Europe (Imaging and Printing Association) is the European association of product manufacturers and technology providers for the imaging and printing industry. Members of I&P Europe include the five major photographic film manufacturers.