hygiena™

Skytrax Implements ATP Testing in COVID-19 Auditing Analyses
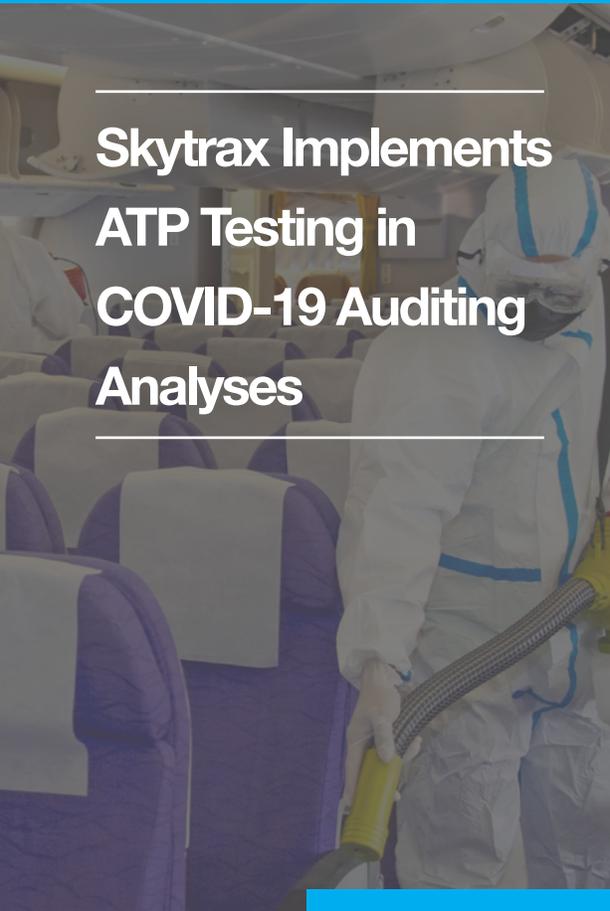
Skytrax, the international air transport rating organisation, was established in 1989, and is based in London, UK. For over 30 years, their corporate ethos has been to conduct work without fear or favour. They are considered "specialist Research and Quality Advisors to the transport industry" and are dedicated to improving the customer experience for airlines and airports across the world.

In 1999, Skytrax established the World Airline and Airport Star Rating Programme; a leading international rating system that classifies airlines and airports by the quality of product and staff service standards. They award Airline Star Ratings (from 1 to 5 stars, 5 being the best) based on detailed, professional analysis of an airline's quality standards via their audit office. This rating covers airport services at the airline's hub, and onboard standards across all applicable cabin / aircraft types. They also provide Airport Star Ratings which includes a quality assessment across all customer-facing items of product and service that an airport provides. In both cases, the focus is on cleanliness through visual inspections and providing airlines of potential issues using photographs of any concerning areas.

Skytrax Airline Star Ratings

When COVID hit, Skytrax began looking for new ways to verify cleanliness. They understood the need to make flyers feel safe and to demonstrate that airlines were taking the necessary precautions to ensure areas are indeed clean. A number of airlines actually requested numerical measurements of cleanliness through verified scientific analysis. This prompted Skytrax to conduct some independent research.

> "Making up about 15% of the audit, Skytrax can not only visually inspect and monitor cleaning, but they now can also provide the data"

This is where they discovered ATP monitoring as a measure of cleanliness. While ATP detection systems do not detect viruses directly, they do measure biological residue present on a surface that is converted into a numerical value, representing the level of cleanliness. They delved further into this topic and found an easy-to-use, rapid, quantitative ATP detection solution: the EnSURE™ Touch system with UltraSnap™ swabs. After testing the product, they confirmed that they now had a quantitative way to test and verify cleanliness. As a result, they moved forward with adding data-based results into their audit program using EnSURE Touch.

EnSURE™ Touch+ UltraSnap™

As a result, in August 2020, Skytrax launched the COVID-19 Safety Ratings covering airlines and airports across the world, providing independent, expert validation of airline and airport COVID-19 hygiene and safety measures. As part of the COVID-19 audit analysis, Skytrax uses ATP testing to measure surface contamination across high touch areas in the airport and onboard. Making up about 15% of the audit, Skytrax can not only visually inspect and monitor cleaning, but they now can also provide the data to show if an area is "clean", establish benchmark values for cleaning, and improve and standardize airport cleaning procedures. The EnSURE Touch system provided tangible data for the airlines to share with their cleaning staff and demonstrated airlines' dedication to cleanliness for their passengers.
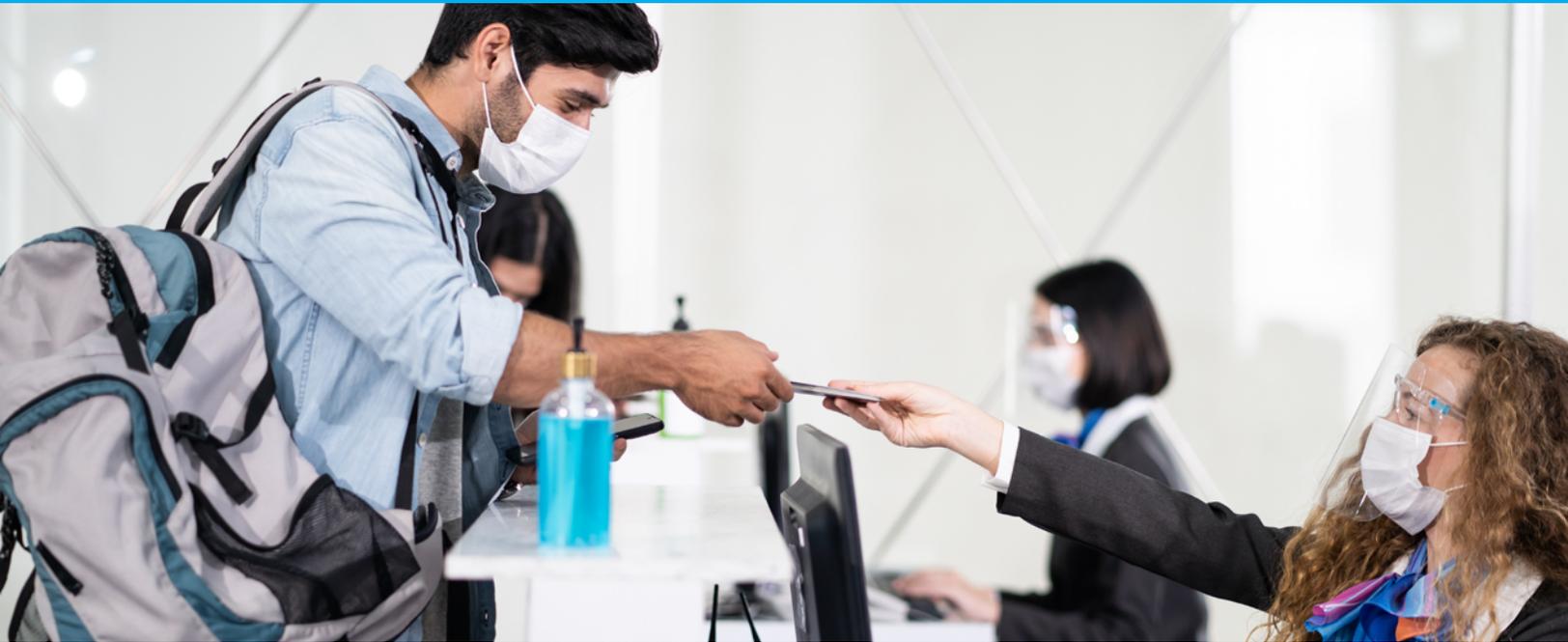
As part of their auditing process, Skytrax monitors airports from 6 am until midnight at randomly selected times, depending on the airport and customer numbers. They typically test 3-4 times during the audit using 10-12 swabs each time, to capture readings on standard surfaces/locations. The full audit lasts 2-3 days and the airport is notified of the findings, so they can take corrective actions, if necessary.

Skytrax also noted the additional benefits of EnSURE Touch such as the compact size (for discretion during testing), ease of use (for training others on how to use the instrument) and rapid time to results when using Hygiena UltraSnap swabs (for advising airlines and airports to take immediate action). Most importantly, "it gives us numerical data for something we can't see otherwise."

According to Edward Plaisted, CEO of Skytrax "The introduction of ATP testing has been a game changer for our analysis of airport and airline cleanliness standards. Evaluating cleanliness has been a core section of our work with both airports and airlines for many years, but largely based on visual observations and procedural analysis, and

> ## "The introduction of ATP testing has been a game changer for our analysis of airport and airline cleanliness standards"

ATP tests provide us with the scientific ability to support our findings. Cross contamination in many cleaning processes has always been a primary problem and already we are seeing airports using our ATP findings to improve (cleaning) procedures".

Skytrax continues to use EnSURE Touch and UltraSnap to monitor cleanliness during airport and airline audits. While not all airports globally believe COVID-19 transmission is through surfaces, the additional testing reassures airlines, airports, and passengers that areas are "clean" with minimized risk. Numerical data verifies that cleaning processes are removing residual contaminants. In addition, it can quickly identify specific surfaces that need addressed quickly. Overall, it's a win-win for all involved.

gem SCIENTIFIC

Hygiena in partnership with GEM Scientific Ltd.