

# Preparing for a Vaccine: American Cargo Operations Conducting Trial Flights From Miami to South America

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FORT WORTH, Texas — The American Airlines Cargo team is preparing for its critical role in transporting the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine once approved. In mid-November, American's cargo operation began conducting trial flights, in conjunction with pharmaceutical and cargo partners, from Miami to South America on its Boeing 777-200 aircraft. The trial flights simulate the conditions required for the COVID-19 vaccine to stress test the thermal packaging and operational handling process that will ultimately ensure it remains stable as it moves across the globe.

Commercial airlines to play an essential role in transporting COVID-19 vaccines in the US and around the world

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While the situation will be unique, the task is not new to American — the airline's cargo operation has been shipping life-saving medicine for more than eight decades. Since the beginning of the pandemic, American has been transporting hundreds of thousands of pounds of personal protective equipment (PPE), medical equipment, COVID-19 test kits and pharmaceuticals to help battle the coronavirus. As a recognized expert in cold chain logistics, American has been involved in transporting components for Phase III COVID-19 vaccine trials, including quickly and

safely carrying test vaccines and specimens to research facilities around the world.

“A COVID vaccine is essential for everyone’s health and well-being and for our nation’s recovery.” said American Airlines Cargo President Jessica Tyler. “The American Airlines team is working collaboratively with cargo, pharmaceutical and federal partners so we are ready to safely and quickly transport an approved vaccine. Despite the significant challenges the airline industry is facing, we’re working night and day to put our greatest strengths to use during this time of need — our network, our aircraft and our incredible team.”

Many vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, need special handling to keep a consistently cold temperature throughout their journey. American has an established network of facilities and team members who specialize in temperature-critical shipments and are familiar with handling the variety of requirements that different pharmaceuticals may need.

This level of expert care has earned American the International Air Transport Association’s prestigious Center of Excellence for Independent Validators in Pharmaceutical Logistics (CEIV Pharma) certification. The CEIV certification is given to air carriers and players in the air cargo supply chain that have established the tools, procedures and staffing to ensure life sciences products are properly handled and arrive at their destination with full efficacy.

Vaccine shipments can be sent in “active containers” with built-in temperature controls that regulate and monitor shipments during transport, or “passive containers” that are cooled with cold packs or dry ice in an enclosed system designed to keep the product cold for the life of its journey.

American’s global network of temperature-controlled facilities provide a variety of climate types for short-term pharmaceutical storage and expert handling while the vaccines are in the airline’s care. From the time a shipment arrives at the airline’s facility, it is tracked throughout its journey on the ground and from American’s Cargo Control Center, located within the airline’s Integrated Operations Control in Fort Worth.

In 2019, Cargo operations began an overhaul of IT infrastructure to ensure better tracking and management of shipments and enable enhanced proactive monitoring capabilities to troubleshoot for potential issues before they occur. Between these technology enhancements and American’s experts on the ground, all cargo shipped on American flights, including sensitive life sciences products, is closely tracked.

The preparations taking place are part of American’s ongoing commitment to its customers to do all it can to keep the world’s goods moving in a difficult year. The commercial aviation industry, like many, has been hit hard by the pandemic. According to Airlines for America, airline passenger volumes are down 50% and U.S. carriers have one-third of their fleet idled due to weak demand. In response, the airline launched cargo-only flying in March to help continue to move food, medical supplies and other essential goods.



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A Boeing 777-200 aircraft with containers ready to be loaded in the cargo compartment at Miami International Airport. American's cargo operation has recently used this type of aircraft and cargo containers for its trial flights from Miami to South America in preparation for transporting the COVID-19 vaccine once approved.

## Resources

American's **temperature-controlled facilities**

American's **ExpediteTC program**

## About American Airlines Group

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