

The naked truth... airport's under-fire scanner is SAFE

Health risk close to zero, says top report

Machines may now come in across Europe

EXCLUSIVE ALICE MCKEEGAN

MANCHESTER Airport's 'naked' body scanner is set to stay – after top scientists declared it safe.

The European Commission stopped all new trials of the controversial £80,000 device amid fears it could emit high levels of cancer-causing radiation. But

after a major study investigating the risks, EU chiefs have declared that the health impact is 'close to zero'.

They said they could not entirely rule out long-term effects, such as cancer risks, but said the machine emitted such a low dosage of radiation that it was likely to pose no greater risk than other factors.

It is expected that the scanner will now be cleared to be brought in across Britain and Europe.

The study said: "The radiation dose from a single passenger being scanned is approximately

equivalent to the natural background radiation received within an hour on the ground or during 10 minutes of a flight at a typical cruising altitude.

"The doses per scan arising from the use of screening for security purposes are well below the public dose limit."

Manchester is the only airport in Europe to use the scanner, which uses x-rays to show up hidden explosives or weapons.

It was introduced on a trial basis in October 2009 and it is now compulsory for passengers at all three terminals selected by the airport's security systems.

The device – known as a back scatter body scanner – uses radiation to penetrate beneath clothing and skin and give a 'naked' outline image of the body.

The Health Protection Agency in England say travellers can safely go through it up to 5,000 times a year.

An airport spokesman said of the report: "As we expected, it has confirmed that back scatter body scanners are safe which is the same conclusion as expert studies already carried out by the UK Health Protection Agency and its US equivalents.

"We expect that the European

Commission will now approve back scatter technology for permanent deployment in aviation security. In the meantime, we will continue with our trial of back scatter body scanners."

The safety report was ordered after American academic Dr David Brenner claimed the scanner could deliver up to 20 times more radiation than previously thought – potentially increasing a person's risk of skin cancer.

And last year, the world's biggest pilots' union – the Allied Pilots Association – called on its members to boycott the device for health reasons.



SAFE The airport scanners had caused concern